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January 31, 1893.

No. 810.

\$2.50
a Year.

PUBLISHED WEEKLY BY BEADLE AND ADAMS.
No. 98 WILLIAM STREET, NEW YORK.

Price,
5 cents.

Vol. XXXII.



OR,

The Gentleman Tramp.

A Romance of the Strange Case at
Roseford.

BY J. C. COWDRICK,
AUTHOR OF "BROADWAY BILLY" NOVELS, ETC.

CHAPTER I.

BILLY MEETS AN OLD FRIEND.

"SWEET pertaters! If it isn't Chinny Chips!"
"Then you know me, eh, Billy? You are the
same old Billy, I find."

"Know you, Chinny? I'd know that mug
anywhere! I'd know you if I met you in China
in native dress."

TO BROADWAY BILLY IT SEEMED ALMOST AN AGE AS HE HALF SPRUNG OUT OF THE
CAB ON THE RUNNING BOARD, FILLED WITH HORROR AT THE SIGHT.

The two had clasped hands and were giving a long and hearty shake, proof that they met as good friends; and Happy Harry and Silent Seth looked on, wondering who "Chinny Chips" could be.

The meeting had taken place in Billy's office. Billy and the boys were talking, when the door opened and this stranger to the boys stepped in.

He did not speak, but waited for Billy to recognize him. And he had not long to wait, for almost at once Billy greeted him as quoted.

The visitor was a young man, perhaps a couple of years older than Billy, but no more; a stout, well-built fellow, but not remarkable for good-looks. He was well dressed, and appeared to be hearty and prosperous.

"Well, sit down and give an account of yourself," Billy invited, when they had finished their hand-shake. "I have not seen you in a dog's age. Guess I haven't met you since the time we dressed out Pug-nose Jake, when he tried to crowd you off your territory."

"Ha, ha, ha! You did do that up fine, though, Billy! No; I guess we haven't met since then. I went away soon after that."

"Yes; I heard from the other kids that you had been adopted by somebody, or something like that, for some service you had done. Where did you go to, anyhow? And what are you doing these days?"

"Why, I'm now a locomotive engineer, Billy, and I'm running the Flyer over in Jersey. I tell you we make things hum when we get a move on us. You must come over some night and take a ride with me. I'll give you the fastest ride you ever had in your life."

"A locomotive engineer—you? Well, if that don't beat all! Why, when you were a kid nobody would have thought you'd ever know enough to engineer a junk-cart. And here you are, running the Flyer! But, how did it come about?"

"Why, you see I saved the life of a little girl one day, and her father fell on my neck and wept tears of joy—fact. He wanted to know who I was and all about me, and when he found I was a kid of the gutters, with no parents and no home, he made me drop my kit and go right along with him. He was an engineer, and after sending me to school for a couple of years he got me a job in the round-house. There I began, and now I'm a full-fledged throttle-jerk. Best of all, I'm married to the little girl whose life I saved. Oh, it's about as good as a romance. Are you married?"

"Nary!" answered Billy. "Don't have time to think about it."

"Well, I'll have to cut my stay mighty short, for I'm in a hurry. I have seen your name in the papers a good many times, and meant to drop in on you the first time I got over here, and here I am. These are the 'pointers' I've read about, I suppose; your team, beagles, or whatever you call them."

He indicated Harry and Seth.

"Yes, they are my team; and a smarter pair of boys never polished leather in Gotham, Chinny."

"They look it. So, they came up from the brush, the same as we did ourselves, did they? This chap looks like you did when a boy, Billy. T'other one is the better looking, though."

The latter compliment was paid to Seth.

"Yes, they started at the foundation," answered Billy; "and are bound to make their mark, too, you bet. But, don't be in such a rush, Chinny; give me a chance to look at you before you tear yourself away."

"Can't do it, Billy; my time is limited to minutes," glancing at his watch. "A railroad man is nowhere if he isn't on time, you know. I'll try and drop in again when I can stay longer, and then we'll have a chin about old times. This is only a flying visit."

"Should say it was. But, say, your road runs through Roseford, don't it?"

"Yes. Why?"

"Nothing; only I have got to go out there to-night—"

"The deuce you have! That will be just the feather. Come over and ride out with me on the Flyer."

"But, your train don't stop—"

"No; but it slows up at the junction crossing, and I will slow it enough so that you can drop off safely. Don't fail to be on hand; we pull out at nine sharp. I'll expect you, sure."

"That will just suit me, Chinny, and I'll do as you say. I'll be on hand if nothing breaks. I'm not wanted there till ten o'clock, and your train will get there before that time. Yes, count on me as your passenger; I'll see what sort of engineer you are."

"All right; but be on time, for the Flyer waits for no man."

"I'll be on time, sure."

There was then a hasty word of parting, and the visitor was gone.

"Christopher Columbia!" cried Happy Harry, the moment the door closed after him, "but that fellow can talk faster than any man I ever heard in my life. I thought I could talk a little, but I can't hold a candle to him."

Broadway Billy laughed.

"He was always that way," he explained. "The fastest speaker I ever heard, I believe. That's how he came to be called Chinny Chips."

"That's a funny name—Chips."

"That isn't his name, though," Harry; we called him Chips because he was little—not big enough for a whole piece, you see. But, he has outgrown that, it seems, and no doubt he's outgrown Chinny, too. His name is Dennis Keyton, if I remember right; I never heard it more than once or twice all the time I knew him. He was always Chinny Chips."

"And he was a bootblack?"

"Yes; used to work one of the cross streets toward the ferry. He was a good sort of fellow, and he and I used to get along pretty well whenever we'd meet. I can't hardly realize it's true, that he's come to be a first-class engineer. Why, I see him now, homely and dirty, with his box on his arm, yelling—'Shine, sir? Shine?' Such meetings make a fellow realize that Time is hustling."

"Nothin' more strange about his bein' a first-class engineer than that you should be a first-class detective, with an office of your own, is there?" Harry argued.

"Yes, there is," Billy declared. "I was a detective born, I believe, and I couldn't have turned out to be anything else if I had tried; with him it was a case of pure luck. But, I'm glad he's grown up to be somebody, anyhow. I tell you, boys, there is a chance for every lad in a country like ours."

"Two chances," spoke Silent Seth.

Happy Harry gave a jump, as though Seth's speaking had frightened him.

"Crackers an' cheese!" he cried. "The Sphinx has said two whole words, boss! He never speaks unless he has got somethin' to say."

"What do you mean, Seth?" Billy asked.

"I mean that every lad has a chance to go to the dogs, or to make a man of himself, just whichever he chooses."

"Yes, that's so; two chances. And, he's all the more manly a chap if he just grits his teeth and makes up his mind that he's going to be something. It's the easiest thing in the world for a boy to go wrong, here in New York."

"And sometimes it ain't all the boy's fault, either," declared Harry.

"You are right," agreed Billy. "When rum and tobacco have been put a little further out of reach it will be a big thing, to say nothing of other evils. There is a serpent in this fair garden of Uncle Sam's, and if Uncle Sam don't plant his heel on its head it's going to do a pile of damage. There's a whole sermon, boys, if you can pick it out."

"But, are you going out there with your friend Chinny to-night, boss?"

"That's the programme, you know. You know I have got to go and see that Mrs. Rohnwald who has sent for me, to learn what she wants. As I intended to tell you, I have made inquiry about her and have learned that she is a very rich widow, and am assured that a call from her is no commonplace matter. The Rohnwald family is at the head of the list, out that way, and it has been hinted that I ought to consider it something of an honor that I have been called upon."

It was Broadway Billy's way, talking to his young apprentices as though they were his equals in every case the combination undertook. He had found it to pay, to let these into a full understanding of every matter in which he was interested.

"But, isn't it funny that she should want you to come at ten o'clock at night?" Harry questioned.

"Yes, it is so; but, she may have some good reason for that, and yet a very simple one. She may intend being away till that hour; or, some one may be there who will be gone by that time."

"Yes, that's so."

"There is something of mystery about it, none the less," Billy mused, taking a letter from his pocket. "She does not say what the case is; merely that she requires my assistance, and tells me to come at that hour. Wonder how she heard of me? But, then, the newspapers have been saying a good deal about us lately."

"A good deal too much," put in Silent Seth.

Again Happy Harry made as if to jump, pretending surprise that Seth should be talking so much.

"The dumb speaks!" he cried. "Wonder of wonders! Boss, if Seth is goin' on this way what will I do? My graft will be broken, sure."

"Seth has not done anything out of common," laughed Billy. "He only spoke because he had something to say. But, Seth, don't you approve of newspaper notoriety? See the puffs you have had."

"It makes me tired. When I do a good stroke, which isn't often, it's enough for me to know it."

"But, you won't find it that way, while you are with Broadway Billy," cried Happy Harry. "Our chief is a chief indeed, and they all know it, and they can't say too much about us."

"Well, we won't trouble ourselves about it, so long as they come within a mile or two of the truth," said Billy. "But, to finish what I started out to say. I'll go out there to-night, and to-morrow I'll be able to let you know what the case is, and if there are any parts for you to play I'll set you at work upon it."

"It was my intention to go out about five o'clock from the city, get my supper out there at a hotel or restaurant, and then learn all I could, quietly, till the appointed hour for the interview. But, this offer of Chinny Chips has led me to alter my plans, for the sake of the ride on the engine of the Flyer. That will be a treat not to be missed."

"Haven't any idea what the case can be, eh?" queried Harry.

"Only some wild speculations that have been running in my mind; nothing that is based on fact."

"Well, we'll be in a fever till you get back, boss, to learn what it is, and we hope that it's a case that will just make us git right up and hump to get there."

"I hope it will be something interesting, at any rate. Whatever it is, great or small, if it is worth taking hold of at all it is worth doing well; and this agency must do its level best, from chief to private."

CHAPTER II.

ALL ABOUT A "PESKY" TRAMP.

THE late afternoon sun of a hot summer day sent its slanting rays along the shining steel rails with no less heat than it had poured down upon them at noontide, so far as the dusty tramp could perceive.

To judge him by his looks, the man had come many a weary mile along the great iron highway. His steps were lagging, and he lifted his staff like one whose strength was far spent. But still he trudged on, evidently intent upon reaching the village ahead before he stopped.

His age was hard to guess, but that he was not an old man his form plainly indicated. He wore a broad slouch hat, and a tangle of hair and beard made it next to impossible to judge of him by his features. He was clad in patched and ragged garments, heavy boots, much the worse for wear incased his feet, and taken all in all he was a perfect specimen of the type he represented.

He was approaching the village of Roseford, on one of the great railroads.

Presently, coming to a spot where the grateful shade of a clump of trees fell across the tracks, he stopped.

Leaning upon his staff, he removed his hat and mopped the perspiration from his brow with a red handkerchief, at the same time looking ahead as if calculating the remaining distance to the village.

"A mighty hard tramp it has been," he said to himself, "and I am glad the end is near. I wouldn't want to go over the same ground again, but I had to do it this time to make my disguise the more perfect. I am tired enough and dusty enough now, goodness knows."

After resting a few moments he plodded on.

"Seven years since I went away from this place, with my father's curse upon my head," he mused, as he looked at the village before him. "He forbade my ever returning while he lived, and I have obeyed, though I loved my father and hoped that I might see him before he died; but, his death coming suddenly, as I have heard it did, that was impossible."

"And now, what would people say, could they know me, to see Robert Rohnwald returning to his native town like this? Ha, ha, ha! But, they cannot guess who I am in such a disguise, and so I am safe. It is my purpose to look around and see how matters stand, before I make myself known. I shall find Gustav

master of Woodlawn Manor, of course; and, if I find, too, that Carlotta has wed him, I shall go away again never to return.

"But, suppose she has not married him? Suppose she has remained true to me as she promised to do? In that case, I will go away quietly and assume my proper attire, and then coming back openly, will go to her and ask her to be mine. And the manor? Well, if father has willed it to Gustav, as he threatened to do, I will let it go and build a fortune for myself. Ha! there is the station, and I venture to say that is the agent, old Goodluck, sitting in his favorite spot on the platform. Little will he imagine such a tramp is Robert Rohnwald."

He pulled his hat still further over his brow, and aiding himself with his staff, moved wearily forward.

Peter Goodluck, the station-agent, was seated in a shady spot on the platform of his station, reading his newspaper, as was his wont on summer afternoons when he had idle moments.

Glancing up and down the track, presently, he espied the approaching tramp, and as he surveyed him over his spectacles as the fellow drew near, said to himself:

"Here comes another one of them pesky tramp critters. I wish I had power to take every pesky one of 'em and lock 'em up, I bet I'd do it, quick. Well, he needn't stop here, I can tell him that. This station ain't no harbor for such as him, not so long as Peter Goodluck has any voice in the matter."

He resumed his paper, with one eye on the tramp occasionally, and did not look up as the tramp came trudging along, nor while he passed, not wanting to encourage such a character to speak to him.

When the fellow had passed, however, then the old agent laid his paper on his lap, removed his glasses, and took a critical look at him as he retreated.

"The dirty, lazy rascal!" he exclaimed. "Why don't he go to work and be a man? The ideal a big, healthy fellow like that being such a good-for-nothing in such a blessed land as ours! There's no social condition to be held 'countable for it; no use to tell me that; it's the lazy vagabond's own choice, that's what it is."

He continued gazing after the subject of his observations, and as he looked, the man having now gone some distance past the station, he noticed a change in his manner of walking. It was only a slight change, but he noted it quickly.

"Bless me!" he ejaculated, "I know that walk, sure's I'm a sinner saved by grace! If it isn't young Rohnwald, him that went away seven years ago, then I'm a know-nothin'. But, it can't be, either; Rob Rohnwald was not the boy ever to turn out so bad as this fellow looks. No, it can't be, of course; but I never seen two persons walk so alike in my life. Not much of a compliment to Robby, bless me if it is; but, I couldn't help noticin' it."

He watched the tramp a little longer, or until he disappeared around a curve, when he took up his paper again.

But now, he could not read, it seemed, and finally throwing the paper down he took off his specks for good and put them in his pocket.

"I can't help thinkin' about it," he mused aloud, "how much that tramp *did* walk like Rob Rohnwald, after he had got a ways past me. But, it couldn't be him, of course; that's out of the question. I wonder what ever became of Robert, anyhow? He was a fine fellow, a good deal better than his proud half-brother, Gustav, and it was always a wonder to me that the old man couldn't see what was so plain to everybody else. Gus takes more after his mother, for Rohnwald himself was a good man, at heart; and his first wife, Rob's mother, was a lady born! But the second wife, Gus's mother—she was not to my liking, to say the very least about her."

"I know them, every one of 'em. I know the whole family, and can give their history for fifty straight years, if necessary. There was Richard Rohnwald, the son of his father if ever a father had a son. He was as like him as one month's report is like another at this station, and that is about as near as anything I can compare 'em to, I guess. Richard didn't marry till he was of considerable ripe age, when he married his first wife, the mother of Robert. She died at the boy's birth, more the pity! Then, in a year, he married that proud thing, his second wife, and Gustav was born. Gus is only two years younger than Rob. The second wife lived till her boy was about six years old, when she died, and in a year again Rohnwald married his third wife, and she is his widow that's left. Oh, yes, I know them all."

"This third wife, and she's a good-enough woman, far as I know, was a widow when Rohnwald married her, and she had a little daughter named Carlotta Gilbert, a dear little child as I remember her at that age, and as fine a young lady now as can be found anywhere. The boys fell in love with her as soon as she came into the house, and from that hour, children as they were, Rob and Gus formed a hatred for each other that only increased as they grew older. Rob was the girl's choice from the first, and if the truth could be known, she loves him now. That's the reason Gus has never been able to get her, and he's crazy after her as everybody knows. I wonder if she knows where Rob is now? If anybody in this place does know, she's the one, that I'll bet on. Bless me, but I would like to see the boy once more. It's strange that ragged tramp should remind me of him so strongly, but his walk was like Rob's for all the world. It is foolish to think it was him, though."

"Poor Rob! the old man was blind indeed when he turned him out, and it's very strange he couldn't see it, as I've said a thousand times. It all came over their love for the girl, too. Rob and Gus had a terrible quarrel, and their father sided in with Gus, as he 'most always did, for he seemed to have a grudge ag'in' Rob, somehow. Rob stood up for his side like a man, and I guess he told the old man some plain facts, for the old man turned him out of the house and told him never to show his face there again; and, the boy never has. That was seven years ago. When the old man made his will he left everything to Gus, after remembering his wife and her daughter suitably; cutting Rob off with a single dollar. I know all about that, for I was one of the witnesses who signed the document. I've signed a hundred vally'ble papers for folks in this town in my day, but I never signed one that went ag'in' the grain like that one did. And it is wonderful strange where that will is, too, for it can't be found anywheres. We all know there was such a will, but it can't be brought to light, though they have almost turned the house inside out to find it."

The old man bowed his head and became lost in a reverie.

He paid no attention to his surroundings till presently a through train came bowling along and whisked past the station, almost overturning the old fellow, chair and all, by the force of the draft it made.

He recovered from his daydream with a start, to find that the shadows had doubled their length while he had been lost in thought, and he rose hastily and took up his chair to go into the office, when a light step upon the end of the platform caused him to turn his head.

Coming toward him was one of the persons of whom he had been thinking, Miss Carlotta Gilbert, her face somewhat pale and manner excited.

The old man stopped, put down his chair, and touched his cap to her politely, saying:

"Did the train scare you, Miss Gilbert? You look as pale as though you had seen a ghost."

"Do I look pale, Mr. Goodluck?" she sweetly asked, with a forced smile. "I shall have to admit, then, that the train did startle me."

"Did you not see it? Which way did you come, then? You can't be too careful around the railroad tracks, Miss Gilbert, for some of these trains do travel at wonderful speed."

"Oh, yes, I know they do; but I am careful. I saw it coming, but it passed me at such perfectly frightful speed, you know. And then, too, I saw you here on the platform as if you were asleep in your chair, as perhaps you were; and what if you had been killed!"

"Ha, ha! That is not likely to happen to me, at this late day in life, miss. But, which way were you coming? If you were coming up the street, you could not see me and the train at the same time, as you say you did. Own up, now; you have been walking on the track again; a thing I forbid you doing years ago, and that command is still in force."

"No, no, Daddy Goodluck, I have not, indeed. I came up through the glen, and was coming along the fence there by the track, where the path runs, you know. But, is my paleness gone? I do not feel pale, I assure you; not a bit."

"You came up from around the bend there? Then maybe you seen that pesky tramp that went around that way awhile ago. If you did, that would be enough to make you pale, I'll be bound; and I guess you did see him, too, for you have grown paler at the mention of him."

"Oh! Daddy, why do you try to tease me? You will make me believe I have had a terrible fright, if I listen to you any longer, and that my

face is a sight to behold, so I'll not listen another minute. Next time I see you in danger I'll just shut my eyes, and then perhaps I won't get such a shock. Good by, Daddy!"

And with a wave of the hand to the old man she hastened away, leaving his remark regarding the tramp unanswered.

CHAPTER III.

A TERRIBLE THREAT OVERHEARD.

MEANWHILE, what of the tramp?

He had scarcely looked up, after passing the station, till he had passed out of sight around the bend.

Here he was in the cool, shady woods belonging to the Rohnwald estate, and taking off his hat he allowed the air to fan his forehead as he walked along.

"Well do I remember this wood," he said to himself. "As a boy, I played over every rod of it, and I well recall how my father raved when the railroad came along and lopped off its finest part."

"Poor father!" after some moments of reflection. "I loved him, although he appeared to have little affection for me, as compared to that he showed for Gustav. I can understand how that was, now, however. Gustav had a mother; I had none. Perhaps it was to please her that father made most of him when both of us were small. Young as I was, I noticed it, and feeling injured, I was moody and resentful; and so came the gulf between father and me, which widened as time passed, till at last it could not be crossed."

"Here is the old nutting ground," he observed again, after proceeding a little distance further. "Here we played together as children, Gustav, Carlotta and I; and there is the old tree where we had the big swing. Just yonder, too, I hear the murmur of the brook, at the old spot where we used to catch the spotted beauties in such numbers that the supply seemed to be inexhaustible. I wonder if any are to be caught there now? The railroad crossed quite close to the favorite pools, I know, and that, perhaps, has driven the fish away. Wish I had a rod; I'd step down there and try it, tired as I am."

He looked longingly upon the familiar spots as he passed on, and his laggard steps seemed to grow more elastic as the murmur of the brook grew louder.

"I'll stop here in the old wood to-night," he said to himself, "and to-morrow I'll pick up what items of gossip I can around the village. It will not be hard for me to learn all I want to know, I guess. I must learn whether father left a will, and what it was. I must learn about Carlotta, and whether she has forgotten me. I must know whether it were better for me to go away unseen and never return, or whether I should come back boldly, assert my rights, and fight for them if need be. And it will depend on how I find the situation. Ha! here is the brook, and there is the old trout pools—Gustav, as I live!"

Here the railroad lay upon a high embankment, and the brook, many feet below, ran under it at right angles, a high arched culvert spanning it; and upon the rocks below, a little distance from the embankment, stood a fisherman.

He was a young man, about twenty-four years of age as any good guesser would have said, and good looking. He was well dressed, wearing something of a sportsman's outfit, with high boots and a cap, and was plying a rod and reel of which no sportsman would have found cause to feel ashamed.

He was busy with his sport, and did not look up, evidently hearing nothing above the constant babbling of the brook, and the tramp on the embankment stood and looked down at him for several minutes in silence, or until a fine catch on the part of the fisher caused him to utter an ejaculation, when the sportsman glanced up at him.

A scowl came upon the young man's brow as he saw it was a tramp.

"What did you say?" he demanded. "Did you speak to me?"

"I said that there was a good ketch ye made," the tramp exclaimed, civilly.

"Yes, it will do well enough," was the rejoinder. "But," was added, "you are a tramp. I take it, and you had better tramp right on about your business."

"Well, I am in a free country, sir, if I am a tramp," was the retort. "I will go or stay, as I please, and not ask your leave either way. I have done nothin' to harm you, that I am aware of."

The young man eyed the tramp sharply.

"Well, you are a tramp, anyhow," he finally cried, "and that is enough. Let me inform

you that I own all this land around you, and that you had better not trespass upon it if you do not want to feel the weight of Jersey law. Fellows of your stripe are not wanted around here, and the sooner you move on, the better."

"Much obliged to you for the information, sir," and the tramp made a bow in mock politeness. "I have no intention of breaking the law in any manner, knowingly, so you need not feel alarmed. And now, if you will take a word of advice from a man who has caught many a trout himself, you will drop a red fly over into that furthest pool, where I think you will pull out a match for the one you have just landed."

The young man looked at the speaker even longer and more steadily, this time, as though there was something about the voice that was familiar to him.

And, of a truth, the language of the tramp was different from what it had been in the first few words he had spoken.

"What do you know about that pool, or any other, around here?" the young man asked.

"I have caught many a trout, sir, and know a likely spot when I see it."

"Well, I'll try it, just for the satisfaction of showing you that you don't know anything about it. I judge that you are a 'gentleman' tramp, from the language you use."

"A gentleman may be a tramp when it suits his pleasure, sir."

"But not all tramps are gentlemen, however."

"True enough."

The angler was changing the fly upon his line, and being ready, presently, sent it out over the pool the tramp had indicated.

Before it touched the water there was a break in the glassy surface of the dark pool, and a glittering trout of splendid size was securely caught upon the sharp hook.

"Ha! excellent!" the tramp cried with enthusiasm.

The sportsman played his prize skillfully for a few minutes, and presently landed it safely.

"Well done!" applauded the tramp, then. "And, you may as well give it up for this time, for we have been making too much noise. However, you have a string not to be ashamed of."

"As you were right in your judgement about my making this catch, I'll take your further advice. There is only one man in the world who could have known where and how to throw to get this last beauty, and that man is—Robert Rohnwald. I recognize you, Sir Tramp."

The tramp muttered an imprecation under his breath.

"Fool!" he hissed. "I allowed my enthusiasm to run away with me, and so have given myself away to him. But, he may only be guessing; I'll see how a denial will go with him."

"It seems that one other did know where the most likely spot was, and that other myself. I have taken hundreds of them, young man, in my time, and my judgment seldom plays me false."

"I am not mistaken; I know you. No man but Rob Rohnwald could have done so well, and you are he. You well say you have taken hundreds of them; you have taken hundreds of them from this very brook."

"You honor and flatter me, sir, but—"

"Pshaw! what is the use of your trying to carry the deception further? Your voice has given you away, if nothing more. You could not carry out the deception. It is no surprise to me that you are here, however, and scarcely any that you come in so disreputable a guise."

"What do you mean?"

"Just what I say. Your present attire well suits your true character."

"Have a care, Gus Rohnwald! You know nothing about me to my discredit, and if I have chosen to masquerade a little, that is my own affair."

"Certainly it is your affair; I do not deny that. You are not here in so disgraceful a character without some vile purpose in your heart, however, and I know it. You had better take your leave as soon as you can."

"I have no evil intentions toward any living soul, Gus, and you know in your heart that you lie when you say it. I am here with honest intent only. I am here in disguise, true, but it was only that I might come and learn how matters stand in the old home and go away unknown, perhaps never to return again."

"Is this your first secret visit here?"

"What do you mean now?"

"I can't make the question any plainer than that."

"Yes, it is the very first time I have been here in seven long years, if that is what you mean."

"Well, you had better make it the last, for

there is not room enough in this place for both of us; and I, as you may have heard, am master of Woodlawn Manor. You have no further interest here."

"If you would not call it trespassing, I would like to come down there and talk with you for a few minutes. Since my identity has been betrayed, I may as well get from you the information I want, and go on my way. We are not friends by any means, I know, but that need not stand in the way of our talking together for a few minutes."

"Come on, then, for it is just as well not to be shouting our business so the villagers can hear."

So, while Gustav Rohnwald was doing up his pole and lines, his half brother descended the steep embankment to the place where he was standing.

"I have heard that father is dead, Gus," Robert said, when he reached the bottom and stopped.

"Yes, he is dead," the brief response.

"And his widow is at the homestead, of course. Is she well?"

"Yes, she is there, and she is well. It will hardly be worth your while to call on her."

"I have no intention of doing so, now that I am known. Had I not met you I might have applied for bread at the kitchen door, in hope of seeing—"

"Do not mention her name, sir. Carlotta Gilbert is my promised wife, and we will marry when father has been dead a proper length of time. If you have come here with any idea of seeing her, I forbid your doing so."

"Your wish in the matter shall be respected, if what you tell me is true."

"And it is, rest assured of that."

"Does she know I am living?"

"She neither knows nor little cares, I guess. Whether she does or does not can make little difference to you now."

"I suppose not. But, you proclaim yourself master of Woodlawn Manor; I take it for granted that father left a will, and that I was cut off with a shilling, as the saying is."

"Yes; you were left the bastard's dollar, which you can get—"

"By heavens! if you mean to apply that epithet to me, Gustav Rohnwald, I will break your head with this hickory staff! Take it back, anyhow, or I'll strike you to the ground where you stand! Take it back, or as I live I will kill you!"

At that moment a face peered through the bushes, a frightened face, the face of a young and pretty woman. She took in the situation at a glance, and drawing back, hastened away along a wood path by which she had just reached the scene, as if fearful that her presence might be discovered.

That young woman was Carlotta Gilbert.

CHAPTER IV.

THE RIDE ON THE FLYER.

At a few minutes before nine o'clock on the evening of the same day of the events chronicled in the preceding chapters, Broadway Billy, the rising young detective of the American metropolis, passed through the waiting-room of the station in Jersey City and made his way out to the train-sheds.

Trainmen were calling out, and the great "Flyer" was making ready for its night-time flight across the State; and passing along down the shed, past the cars and hurrying porters with trucks of baggage, Billy came to the engine, which stood singing under its heavy pressure of steam, as though eager and anxious to be on its way; and there he found his friend eagerly looking for him.

"Hello, Billy! here you are, eh?" the young engineer cried. "Was half afraid you had backed out."

"Nary a back-out!" cried Billy, in response. "I said I'd be here, Chinny, and here I am. I wouldn't miss this ride for anything."

"Well, I'm glad you came. Get right up, and I'll be with you as soon as I squirt on a little grease. Have to have plenty of that on, you know, for this train."

Billy climbed up and took his seat upon the left side of the cab, and by the time he had got himself comfortably fixed for the ride the engineer joined him, when Billy thought to ask:

"By the way, Chinny, this won't get you into any trouble with the company, will it?—my riding with you on the engine."

"Don't worry about that, Billy," the engineer reassured; "I asked for a pass for you and have got it all right. Otherwise it wouldn't do, of course."

"Greatly obliged to you; I never thought of that part of it till now."

"It's all right; you're my guest."

They had not long to wait. The bell soon sounded, the conductor gave the signal, and the young engineer pulled the throttle.

The monster of iron obeyed the touch as though endowed with life and reason, it started forward, slowly at the first but gaining in speed with every turn of the wheels, and they were quickly out of the shed.

Then through the "yard" with its labyrinth of tracks the giant iron horse picked its way, as though it were indeed selecting its own course instead of being guided by the rails; while numerous lights flashed on every hand, each a signal of safety, danger or caution.

When the yard had been cleared the throttle was pulled again, and in prompt obedience to the will of its master the great machine sprang forward like a racer, and the train was soon dashing along over the gleaming rails like a monster.

"This is glorious!" Broadway Billy cried, drinking eagerly of the cool air that rushed in upon him through the window.

"Then you like it, hey?" shouted the engineer in response. "We'll be traveling after awhile, when we get right down to it. Haven't got fairly started yet."

"I should call this pretty fast getting there, as it is," Billy rejoined.

"Well, yes, it's moving some, I admit."

"I almost envy you your situation, Chinny."

"There's many a worse calling, even if there is danger."

The night was a glorious one; the moon being full and bright, the whole scene around and about them was almost as light as day.

The view was constantly and rapidly changing, as they plunged forward, and the engine swayed from side to side, with an occasional jerk, as though, now maddened, it were running away.

Occasionally the whistle sounded; at intervals the bell rung out its warning; and on and on they flew.

Billy and the engineer talked, about one thing and another, and the time passed all too quickly.

At last Billy's journey was coming to an end; the lights of Roseford were in sight.

"Well, I'll soon lose you, I s'pose," the engineer observed.

"That Roseford ahead there?"

"On the left. We make a big bend just ahead here, and then comes the junction. Take care when you get down to get off."

"All right; I'll look out. Haven't had such a glorious experience in a month of Sundays, Chinny. I'll pay you back for it sometime when I catch you in New York. I won't forget it."

"Oh! that's all right; come and take another ride sometime, only let me know beforehand. Tom there will show you how to get down, but don't step off till he gives you the word. Look out for him, Tom; see that he gets off clear when I slow."

"All right!" the fireman responded.

The engineer had turned his head to speak to the fireman, and as he again fixed his gaze upon the track ahead he was seen to start.

He sprang up and peered out sharply; the next instant he applied the steam brakes, gave one short, sharp blast with the whistle, and reversed the engine, all in the shortest time imaginable.

Broadway Billy, noting quickly the engineer's first alarm, had looked ahead along the track at almost the same time as the engineer himself, and there, to his horror, only a little distance ahead and on his side of the engine, right across the rail, lay what looked to be the body of a man!

They were yet on the straight line, just entering a piece of woods, and only a little way ahead was the bend of which the engineer had spoken. The moon shed her full light down upon the track, and objects could be seen as plainly, almost, as by daylight. And, by the time the engineer had put on the brakes and reversed the engine, they had come so much nearer to the object on the rail that there was no mistaking what it was.

It was a man!

The speed of the train was rapidly lessening, but the engineer had no sooner done all in his power than he recognized that the stop could not be made soon enough to save the victim.

"He's a goner, Billy, unless I can reach the cowcatcher before the engine reaches him," he cried, his face pale but his manner perfectly cool; and as he spoke he opened the window in front of him and hastened out upon the running-board and made his way forward.

No more than half a dozen seconds had elapsed since the man had been first espied, yet to Broad-

way Billy it seemed almost an age as he half sprang out of the cab on the running-board, filled with horror at the sight but unable to remove his gaze from it. The speed was growing less, but no power could stop the train before the man was reached.

The track itself seemed to be in motion, as it appeared to Billy, carrying the poor victim under the crouching wheels, swiftly, surely!

Another second and it would be done—But, the engineer was there! He let himself down upon the pilot; he stooped; and—

Broadway Billy saw it all as it happened. He saw the engineer receive a powerful jerk, one that almost tore him from his hold; the next moment—ay, the same moment—there was a sickening *something* felt under the heavy wheels, and all was over.

The train did not run another length before it stopped, and the conductor and trainmen were out with their lanterns immediately.

The fireman had sprung to the throttle the moment the engineer left it, and he now quickly shut off steam and brought the reverse-lever to a center position; while Broadway Billy jumped down to run back with the engineer and others.

"That almost fixed me, Billy," his friend said, hurriedly. "That man was tied fast to the rails, sure as you live!"

"Tied fast!" Billy exclaimed, struck with horror at the thought.

"Yes; if he hadn't been I could have taken him along, for I got a grip on him that almost carried me under the wheels with him."

"That was horrible!" Billy could not help exclaiming. "If that was the case, here is a crime, and I think I'll take a hand in working it out. Poor devil, he is done for."

They had now come to where the body lay, under the middle of the last car, and it had been ground in two by the many wheels that had passed over it.

True enough, as the engineer had guessed, the man had been bound to the rail, a rope passing two or three times over his body and as many times under the rail, so that it had been impossible for him to escape.

For a moment Billy had to turn away, fairly sickened at the sight; but in the next moment all his detective instinct was keenly alive, and he stepped forward and laid a hand upon the dead man's face, the thought having struck him to learn whether he had been placed there alive or dead.

"He was dead long before the engine touched him," he cried. "The body is cold."

"That's so?" cried the engineer. "I'm glad of that, anyhow. It's bad enough as it is, but I'm glad the Flyer didn't kill him."

"Well, get the body out from there, boys, quick," ordered the conductor of the train, "and we'll take it on to the station. We have no time to lose, but we are losing it fast."

The rope was quickly removed and the body lifted out and carried forward to the baggage-car, all going with it save the young detective.

As soon as the others had gone he gathered up the pieces of rope and thrust them into his pocket, and looked carefully around by the light of a match to see if any clew might be found.

There was nothing, however, and he ran forward and reached the engine again just as the train started.

"You won't need to get off at the junction now," the engineer said; "we'll have to stop at the station. You have had more experience than you bargained for, Billy."

"Well, yes, rather more," Billy admitted. "I'll tell you what it is, though, Chinny, I am going into this case and find out all about it, if I can. My detective fever is away up, now, and I must solve the mystery of the dead man if it is in the wood."

"And you can do it, I'll bet, by all that I've read and known about you. I'll watch the papers to read the case, for I'm sure it will be one."

"Yes, I think it will, and I'll tell you all about it after it is over."

They were soon at the Roseford station, where the body was given into charge of the watchman, the station being closed, with instructions that he should notify the proper authorities.

Billy asked the man if he recognized the face, but he did not; and after he had assisted the trembling fellow to put the body in the store-room where it would be safe for the time being, set out to keep his appointment with Mrs. Rohnwald, having but few minutes to spare to be there promptly on time.

He could little imagine the new complications

that had now arisen in the very matter in the interest of which he had been called, and concerning which he knew nothing whatever yet. Had not the watchman at the station been a comparative stranger at Roseford, he would have known that the dead man was none other than *Gustav Rohnwald of Woodlawn Manor!*

CHAPTER V.

THE WOODLAWN MANOR CASE.

It was a few minutes' walk from the railroad station to the center of the village proper, and when he came there Billy found that most of the stores and shops had closed for the night, and that the streets were almost deserted.

Making inquiry of a person he met, Billy soon learned where Woodlawn Manor was, and turning his steps in the direction of the old manse, hastened forward to learn the matter of business upon which he had been called.

When he came to the house he found it to be a large, old-fashioned homestead of colonial days, setting well back from the road and partly shut in by the giant trees standing in front of it.

As he stepped upon the piazza he heard a loud clock within striking the hour of ten, and the moment the clock ceased to strike he lifted the knocker and awoke the echoes in the hall.

The door was opened promptly by a manservant.

"I desire to see Mrs. Rohnwald," Billy made known.

"What is your name, please, sir?" inquired the servant.

"William Weston."

"You are expected, sir. Follow me, please."

He conducted Billy down the hall and opened a door on the left, announcing as he did so:

"Mr. Weston, ma'm."

The room was a small but cheerful apartment, and seated in an easy chair by one of the open windows was a woman of middle age, a pleasant-faced lady with silvered hair.

"You are prompt to the minute, Mr. Weston," she greeted, without rising. "Be seated here near me, please, so that we may talk in low tones."

"I make it a point to be on time, whenever possible, madam," Billy made answer, taking the chair the lady indicated.

"You are a younger man than I expected to see, Mr. Weston, after all I have read about you."

"Yes; I am little more than a boy, being only in my twenty-second year."

"You look even younger than that; but, you have won a reputation to be proud of, if all accounts are true, and I have confidence enough in you to trust my case to you."

"I will serve you to the best of my ability, madam, if the matter is one I can undertake. Please let me hear what it is, together with all the particulars concerning it. But, first please say what the nature of the case is."

"Well, it will come under the head of robbery, I suppose, as you will class it. A valuable document has been stolen from this house, and I want you to undertake to recover it. But, the affair is so shrouded in mystery that it may prove no easy task for you."

"It is a case I can undertake. Now, for the particulars of it, and I will be able to form some idea regarding it."

"Then do I understand you that you do not take all kinds of cases that are offered?"

"I do not, madam. I have to refuse a good many. The criminal case is my specialty."

"So I have been led to imagine. Now, I will tell my story, and then I'll expect you to say what you think of the affair."

"Very well."

"In order that you may have a full understanding of it, I must give you the family history in brief. I will inform you that I am a widow, as perhaps you have already learned, or as you may have guessed, seeing me in mourning. My husband, Richard Rohnwald, died some months ago. I was his third wife, and he had no children by me, though he has left two sons, one child having been born to each of his other wives. I have a daughter by a former husband, now twenty-two years of age. Her name is Carlotta Gilbert.

"Mr. Rohnwald's son by his first wife is named Robert. The son by the second wife, two years younger than Robert, is named Gustav. He is now a young man of twenty-four. When I came into the family these boys were aged nine and seven, respectively, and my daughter was aged five. The boys immediately formed a strong attachment for Carlotta, and, as time passed, their affection ripened into love, and they became hated rivals to each other on her account. Finally, they had a violent quar-

rel, and their father, taking the part of Gustav, turned Robert out of the house and forbade him never to show his face here again.

"A little time after that Mr. Rohnwald made his will, in which, after some minor bequests, he left the bulk of his property, real and personal, to Gustav, giving Robert the sum of one dollar only. This will, and its terms, were no secret in the family or in the neighborhood; and although everybody thought it unjust to Robert, nothing could turn Mr. Rohnwald from his purpose, and he declared the will should stand just as he had framed it; that he knew perfectly well what he was about, and that it was his own business. So, the will was put away, and it passed out of mind, almost, till the death of Mr. Rohnwald, when it was looked for, but it was looked for in vain. It was not to be found."

"And it has not been found yet?"

"Wait; I am coming to that. The lawyer, Mr. Percival, offered to take the will, he says, but Mr. Rohnwald did not allow him to do so, saying he had a safe place for it here in the house, and that he did not want to take any chances of its being lost. Mr. Percival thought strange of that, for he had taken care of other valuable papers, and had been doing so for years; but, Mr. Rohnwald had his way about it, so the will was left in his keeping, and we knew that wherever it was hid it was not outside of this house; Mr. Rohnwald's words to the lawyer stood as proof for that. But, the house was ransacked from top to bottom, in every crook, cranny and corner, and the will could not be found. Now comes the mysterious part of it. A few nights ago this house was entered and that will was stolen from its hiding-place, of which we are sure beyond question."

"The affair begins to savor of the mysterious."

"Yes, so it does; and still, before I am done you may say it is a very plain case indeed. On the morning of the discovery of the robbery I happened to be the first one to enter the library, and the moment I entered the door a surprising sight met my astonished gaze. Over the mantelpiece was a hole in the wall, with a door standing wide open; the hole was about a foot square in size. It was a secret recess of which no one in the house had ever known the existence. With the door closed it was invisible, the door fitting in as a part of the mantle carving. But, there it was, and that was not all. On the floor lay a large envelope on which was written—'Last will of Richard Rohnwald.' The envelope was empty, the will was gone! Afterward, Mr. Percival identified the envelope as the one in which the will had been put when he delivered it to Mr. Rohnwald, and the writing on it was his. A search around showed that entrance had been gained by forcing one of the parlor windows."

"And there was no clue as to the identity of the robber, Mrs. Rohnwald?"

"No, no clue whatever; but, suspicion has pointed to a certain person whose whereabouts is unknown, and that person is—Robert Rohnwald, the disowned heir. Public opinion is very strong against him, and it is now remembered against him that his father strongly disliked him, for some reason or other which was never fully known to anybody. He may have had knowledge of this secret place in the wall; it certainly appears positive that no one else had. And no one else, as it appears, could have any interest in doing away with that will, since no one else had anything to gain by it. You can readily perceive how it stands. With the will Robert was cut off entirely; with no will, then he would come in for an equal share with Gustav, which would enrich him; for Mr. Rohnwald died a very wealthy man. There is very good ground, it seems to me, for the suspicions against Robert, though I am very sorry it is as it is. Now, I would like to have your opinion of the matter, as it looks to you, and then I want to find and recover that will, if possible."

"What is your interest in the will?" Billy inquired.

"You are quick to note everything, I see," the woman rejoined. "I will tell you. By the will I am more liberally provided for than with no will; and besides that, a small legacy was left to my daughter. You see, I have an active interest in the matter, Mr. Weston."

"The explanation is satisfactory. And now my opinion in regard to it: I have to admit the suspicion against Robert Rohnwald is strong indeed. If he is guilty, then the will can never be restored, for he has destroyed it. He would not allow it to exist any longer than he could not help. And, even if he is not the guilty one, I fear the will has met the same fate. My belief is that it will never be found."

"Then you think with the rest that Robert is guilty, do you?"

"I have not said so, madam. On the contrary, I see some reason to think he may be wholly innocent of the theft."

"You do! You surprise me, sir, when everybody else seems so positive it must have been he that did it. Will you tell me upon what you base that idea?"

"If he was the thief, why did he leave the secret door open and the envelope on the floor? Would he not have been more likely to have closed the door in the wall and leave no trace of his visit?"

"Oh! that has been brought up, Mr. Weston, but Mr. Percival has disposed of it. You see, it was so well known that Mr. Rohnwald did leave a will, he argues, that it would be to Robert's interest to have it known the will had been destroyed."

"I don't think so, and on that point I can't agree with the lawyer. That is the best proof that the will existed at the time of Mr. Rohnwald's death, and if the witnesses are all living and can remember the conditions of the will, it might be hard for Robert to break it, even if destroyed."

"I had not thought of that. I don't know how that point would be in law."

"Nor do I; it was only a thought that came to me. But, I think Robert would have been more apt to leave no trace of his visit, for then he could raise the argument that, no will being found, perhaps his father had destroyed it before he died."

"Upon my word, Mr. Weston, your reasoning in the matter seems sound. Still, there is much against the young man. Perhaps some noise in the house alarmed him, and he left in such haste that he forgot the door and dropped the envelope in his flight. But, I do not pretend to know; that is why I have called upon you. Will you take the case and endeavor to solve the mystery?"

"I will, and with much interest. I cannot, however, promise success; I seldom do that. And, it may prove a slow case. I may have trouble to find Robert Rohnwald, and I certainly shall not find him readily if he is guilty. In that case, he has no doubt put distance between himself and this place, and will endeavor to prove an *alibi*. If innocent, he will be able to prove the *alibi*, no doubt; though that would not prove that he had no hand in it, for he might have taken some one into the scheme with him, and his accomplice may have been the one who did the work. Now, with your permission, I will ask some questions, madam."

Just then Billy fancied he heard a slight noise outside the window.

CHAPTER VI.

THE TERRIBLE NEWS COMES HOME.

THE young detective was seated so that he could command a view of the window without turning his head, and he cast a quick look in that direction. But, no one was to be seen, and as the sound was not repeated he gave it no further thought then.

If loud enough for him to hear, it was certainly loud enough for the woman's ears, she being nearest to the window; and as she paid no attention to it he set it down in his mind as having been made by some trifling accident; perhaps by a cat moving along beneath the window.

And, she having given him permission to question her, he now proceeded to inquire into the particulars of the whole matter.

"Do I understand you, Mrs. Rohnwald, that you never knew why Mr. Rohnwald hated his elder son?"

"I never knew in particular, Mr. Weston. Gustav was his favorite."

"Which of the sons was your favorite?"

"You ask me a hard question."

"Why is it hard?"

"Woman's reason; because it is. Knowing that Mr. Rohnwald mistrusted Robert and almost hated him, as you express it, I suppose I looked upon him with something of the same suspicious feeling. But, I never spoke an unkind word to him, that I can remember."

"What was your opinion of his character? Was it good, or was it bad? You certainly know that."

"I never knew any evil of him. He was gloomy, almost morose, in his father's presence, and spent most of his time in the woods and around the village, seeming to avoid the house all he could. Gustav was with his father a good deal, and was quite petted. I once spoke to Mr. Rohnwald about it, but he dismissed the matter so abruptly that I never ventured to mention it again."

"And what is your opinion of Gustav? If you had any preference between them, in whose favor did it lie? All this is important to me, and it will help me to reach right conclusions," so do not think me over inquisitive.

"Well, I liked Gustav; I have nothing in the world against him; but, feeling a good deal of sympathy for Robert, he has naturally been more in my thoughts, and after he went away I came to know that I regarded him with a good deal more affection than I had ever thought I had for him before. To be very frank with you, Mr. Weston, I hope you can prove him innocent in this matter; but, I have told you just how black it appears against him."

"What was his reputation in the village? Since, as you say, the whole place seems to be against him now, he could not have been very well thought of, one would naturally infer. Can you tell me anything about that? Trifling items are sometimes important."

"Robert was well thought of at the time of his going away, I have reason to believe. Now, however, mention of his name brings a shake of the head and an 'I-told-you-so' look upon a good many faces. There are those, however, who stick up for him. For instance, there is Peter Goodluck, the old station-agent at this place, with whom Robert was a favorite; he will not believe the boy is guilty of the theft of the will, and stoutly maintains that Mr. Rohnwald did him a great injustice; that he never understood the lad's good qualities as he should have known them."

"Another question, Mrs. Rohnwald. You have told me that Robert and Gustav were rivals for your daughter; which one did the young lady regard with most affection? This may have some bearing upon the case."

"She loved Robert—loves him still. This sad affair is breaking her heart. I see there is no use keeping anything back from you, for you will have it out, anyhow. I have told you that my object in sending for you was that the will might be recovered because I and my daughter have interest in it; but, that reason stands only secondary to the main reason, that for my daughter's sake I must have the mystery cleared up, if possible. There are two reasons running parallel in this. One is, if Robert is shown to be innocent, I have given my word to my child that I will favor his suit for her hand; and the other, if he is proven guilty, then she has pledged her word to me that she will wed Gustav."

"Then you have been urging her to marry Gustav, I can understand, but she has refused, because she loves the absent Robert. You favor the younger man because he is the heir to the estate, I take it. Now, if both were poor, or both alike rich, which had you rather see her wed?"

"Robert."

The answer came promptly.

Again Billy fancied he heard a noise outside by the window, but this time it was even less loud than before, and he gave it no attention.

The conversation was being carried on in very low tones, and the young detective did not think it possible that an eavesdropper could overhear, even if there was one.

"Your choice is named promptly," Billy remarked.

"Not because I have anything against Gustav; because I know Carlotta loves Robert."

"Another question: What was your object in having me come at so late an hour, Mrs. Rohnwald?"

"In order that idle gossip might have less to say, for I am sure you have come with all the caution of your calling, sir; secretly."

"As secretly as possible; I had to inquire where you live, of course, but that was all. That was your only reason, then, why I should come by night, madam? If not I ought to know."

"You suspect some other reason?"

"No, not necessarily; I thought there might be some particular person whom you would not want to know that you have employed a detective."

"I see again, Mr. Weston, the folly of trying to hold back anything from you or to deceive you in any degree. My confidence in you is growing constantly, and I am sure you will succeed with this case."

"But, that does not answer my question."

"True. The reason you have suggested was my main reason for having you pay your visit to me by night. I do not want Lawyer Percival to know of it, if I can keep it from him, at any rate for the present. He has advised against it, you understand, and he is my lawyer."

"What was his reason for that? Does he not want some effort made to find the will?"

"I will tell you. With all the rest of the village, nearly, he thinks it must have been Robert who took the document, and he would spare him if he could."

"While you, who profess to like Robert better than Gustav, in your secret heart, would have me hunt him down and drag him to justice, even though he loves your daughter and she loves him."

"I am sure, Mr. Weston, that you understand me well enough, even though you pretend not to do so. You are so quick to read what I have partly tried to hold back, I am sure you have not failed to understand what I have meant you should understand. I will, however, speak out plainly."

"It were better to do so, madam."

"Well, I have told you my daughter loves Robert. If there is a person in the world who knows him well, it is she, and she stoutly maintains that he is innocent; she declares it is impossible that he can be otherwise. Had he known where that will was, and had wanted to destroy it, he would have come here openly and above-board and done it. His nature is too noble to allow him to play the thief. This is her argument; and so positive is she that, in spite of all appearances, I, too, believe Robert is innocent. So, I do want the will found and the guilty one punished. If we are mistaken, and it is Robert, well and good; but, if he is innocent and you can prove him so, better still. Now, sir, you cannot fail of understanding me."

"No; you have made your whole object plain."

"Is there anything further you would like to inquire about?"

"Yes; concerning the whereabouts of Robert Rohnwald."

"I have not the slightest idea where he can be, Mr. Weston."

"No; but your daughter? If any one can give me a clue to him, it is she, I am sure."

"She does not know. I have asked her, and she declares she has not heard of him since the day he left here seven years ago."

"That is bad; I hoped to get my start from her. But, perhaps his old friend the station-agent can give me the clue I need. Perhaps he has heard from him at some time or other during his absence."

"Possibly; I cannot say."

"And this is the whole matter of the business for which you called me?"

"Yes; you have heard it all, fully. Take the case, Mr. Weston, and solve the mystery if you can. What is your fee?"

That part of the business was speedily and satisfactorily adjusted, and the young detective was about to take his leave when many heavy steps were heard on the piazza and the knocker resounded through the house.

"Mercy! what can that mean?" cried Mrs. Rohnwald, in alarm.

Her face had grown suddenly pale, and she stood with her hands clasped as if apprehending something terrible.

The steps of the man-servant were heard immediately, and at the same time Billy caught again the sound he had heard twice before just outside the window, and this time he decided to know what it was.

With a single step he was at the window, and was just in time to see a woman in a light dress disappear around an angle close at hand. Some one had been eavesdropping, and that person, he guessed, had been Mrs. Rohnwald's daughter, Carlotta Gilbert. And, he was not mistaken.

By that time the man-servant had opened the door, and excited voices were for a moment heard, when the servant came running to the door of the room in which his mistress and her caller were, which he flung open hastily without pausing to knock, and he looked like a man who had seen some terrible apparition, being as pale as death and his eyes widely dilated.

"My God! what is the matter?" Mrs. Rohnwald cried. "What has happened? It is nothing to Carlotta, is it? Speak, man! Speak!"

The trembling man-servant stood with his mouth open, but the power of speech seemed to have deserted him utterly, for the moment. By a desperate effort, however, he managed to gasp out:

"Mr. Rohnwald!—Master Gustav!—he has been killed—"

There was a woman's piercing shriek in the hall, followed by a fall, and Broadway Billy sprang out, Mrs. Rohnwald after him.

Prone on the floor of the hall lay a woman, the woman of the same light dress of which Billy had caught a glimpse a moment before at the

window, and at sight of whom Mrs. Rohnwald wildly cried:

"Carlotta! My child! This terrible shock has killed her!"

CHAPTER VII.

ATTENDING INCIDENTS.

SOME thoughts ran like lightning through Broadway Billy's mind. In a brief moment a good deal of thinking can be done.

First, he questioned, why, if this young lady and her mother were agreed that Robert Rohnwald was innocent of the crime of stealing the will, had the young woman played the part of eavesdropper? Why had she not come boldly into the room?

Then, too, if she loved Robert so much more than Gustav, why should the news of his death affect her so? But, for that, there was the acceptable explanation that perhaps she was very nervous, and the same news regarding one of the servants might have produced the same effect upon her.

These thoughts, and others besides, flashed through his mind in a brief moment, yet without any apparent hesitation or loss of time he said:

"No, she's not dead, Mrs. Rohnwald; the shock has only caused her to faint. Here, sir," to the man-servant, "help me to lift her and we will carry her into the room here."

The servant sprang quickly to obey, and taking the insensible girl up, he and Billy carried her into the room and laid her on a lounge, where Mrs. Rohnwald and some of the women servants, who had come running quickly to the scene, set about applying restoratives.

Broadway Billy, as soon as he had disposed of the fainted girl, stepped out again into the hall to learn what he could about the tragedy that had just been announced. He had the thought in mind that perhaps this was the young man who had been found dead on the railroad and run over by the Flyer. He had noted that person had been a young man and well dressed.

One of the men who had brought the body home was standing in the hall, turning his hat in his hands nervously, while several others were outside on the piazza in a group around a dark, dread something which lay on a rude stretcher at their feet, and stepping to the door Billy quickly recognized, by the light of a lantern and that of the moon together, that his hasty guess had been correct. It was the body of the victim of the railroad tragedy.

The young detective said nothing for a moment, while he considered what stand to take in the matter; whether to let it be known that he had seen the body before, or to say nothing about any previous knowledge of the awful affair.

He quickly decided to pursue the latter course. "How did this happen, sir?" he questioned the man in the hall, who had stepped with him to the door.

"Why, sir, he was run'd over on the railroad, sir," the man explained. "It is a case wuss'n that, though, fer he was found tied to the rails, so they tell."

"Indeed! Then it looks like a case of murder. Has any examination of the body been made yet?"

"Yes, I have given it some examination—I'm the coroner here, you know; and I find that his head has been cracked, as if with a bludgeon. I have sent for the doctor to come and look inter it more closter."

"You have done right. It is a matter that must be sifted. If murder has been done, and that is hardly to be doubted, under the circumstances, the guilty man must be brought to account for it. Have you any suspicions as to who can have done the dreadful deed?"

"Well, there's a hint afloat, sir, a hint, but not knowin' you I won't mention it here and now. You are a stranger to me, I believe, sir."

Billy would have responded, but just then Mrs. Rohnwald came hastily out and passed between him and the coroner, and he took advantage of the interruption and said nothing further then.

"My God! this is terrible!" the woman cried, wringing her hands. "How did it happen, men? how did it happen? Where was he found? Heavens! he has been run over on the railroad! Oh! this is too horrible to bear! Poor Gustav! Poor boy, poor boy!"

"We hated to bring him here, Mrs. Rohnwald," the coroner said, "but we thought it was best to do so, for we knowed you wouldn't want him taken nowhere else; but I kin see now that we'd orter 'a' come and sort of broke it to you more

lighter, so you could bear it more easier. It's an awful thing."

"Tell me how it happened, Mr. Parkerburg," the woman asked.

"Nobody knows jest how it did happen, Mrs. Rohnwald," was the coroner's reply. "He was found tied fast to the railroad track, and the train came along and run right over him."

"Oh! Oh!"

"But, he was dead 'fore that, ma'm, for the body was stone cold, almost, and I have found a dent in his head where he was hit with a bludgeon or somethin'. It is a case of murder, Mrs. Rohnwald; seem' that you know this much you may as well know the worst of it. He was murdered, and his murderer tied him to the rails."

Mrs. Rohnwald had staggered back as though she had been struck a blow, and her face was the hue of death itself.

"Murdered!" she gasped. "Murdered!"

"There don't seem to be no doubt about it, ma'm."

"But, who can have done so cowardly a deed? And for what purpose?"

"We don't know, ma'm, but we are going to the place where he was found to look around."

"Yes, yes, you must do that; you must not leave a stone unturned till you have learned the truth—till you have discovered the wretch who has done this deed."

"Mr. Weston?"

She looked around suddenly seeking him. "Here I am, Mrs. Rohnwald," Broadway Billy responded, stepping forward.

"That other matter pales into insignificance in the face of this terrible crime. Here is work for you indeed. Do not stop at anything till you have discovered the fiend who has done this work."

"I have already made up my mind to do that," Billy said modestly.

"Might I ask who the gentleman is, Mrs. Rohnwald?" said the coroner, as all eyes were fixed upon Billy.

"This is Mr. Weston the detective, from New York," the woman hurriedly introduced. "Mr. Weston, this man is Mr. Parkerburg, the coroner here. Lend him all the help in your power to get at the truth."

"You ain't the Mr. Weston, detective, I hear so much about in the papers, be ye?" Mr. Parkerburg cried; "him they call Broadway Billy?"

"The same," Billy acknowledged.

At that moment another personage came hurriedly up the flag walk, pantingly demanding as he came:

"What's this I hear? What's this I hear? Gus Rohnwald run over by the cars! Is he dead, gentlemen? Is he dead?"

"Yes, he is dead, Doctor Graves," said Mrs. Rohnwald, sorrowfully. "This is a sad blow, indeed for this house. And, worst of all, they say it is a case of murder."

"Murder!"

"Yes, Mr. Parkerburg says he was dead before he was put on the track, and he was found bound fast to the rail."

"Good heavens! this is terrible!"

"And I sent for you, Doctor Graves," said the coroner, "for you to examine the body thoroughly and find out jest what the cause of death was. The poor fellow never broke his own head in and tied his own self to the track, that is sure."

"Of course not, Parkerburg, of course not. Where shall we take the body, Mrs. Rohnwald? The outside kitchen will be the best, I should say, seeing how terribly it is mangled. Lend a hand here, men, and carry it around this way. I'll see to it, Mrs. Rohnwald, I'll see to it."

And in that way the old village doctor took the matter upon his own shoulders for the time being, relieving Mrs. Rohnwald of it all.

Of that she was glad enough, and a sigh of relief escaped her as she turned and went back to the room where she had left her daughter; Broadway Billy following her there.

As they entered the room the girl was just coming to.

"He did not do it, oh! he did not do it!" she cried, looking around her in a bewildered manner.

Broadway Billy caught the words, and immediately a new thought came to his mind. Had this girl some knowledge of the affair more than would appear possible for her to possess?

Her eyes wandered from face to face, and gradually she seemed to realize where she was and what had happened. She said no more, and already Billy had found an explanation for the words she had spoken. The case against Robert Rohnwald had been uppermost in her mind, af-

ter the talk to which she had been listening, and no doubt that was what her words had reference to.

"My child, my child, try to be calm," the mother said, stroking her hair in a gentle manner. "You will need all your strength. Try to be calm. You fainted, and have just recovered from it."

"Yes, I know, mamma; I remember now. Poor Gustav! Yes, I must bear up, for I will need all my strength, as you say."

This last was said with such firmness and calmness that Broadway Billy could not help taking particular notice of it.

"You wanted to see me further, sir?" asked Mrs. Rohnwald, as she just then noted Billy's presence.

"For nothing in particular," Billy answered. "As soon as the coroner is ready I will go with him to the scene of the crime."

"Mamma, who is this person, please?" asked the young lady, quite eagerly.

"He is a detective, dear—"

"Oh! yes; now I remember—"

"You remember?"

"Oh! I hardly know what I am talking about, mamma; my head is strange yet, from my faint."

The mother accepted this explanation readily enough, but not so Broadway Billy. He saw more in the girl's words and manner than appeared on the surface, he believed.

"Then do not try to think, dear," the mother said, soothingly. "Just rest where you are till you are fully recovered. And you, Mr. Weston, when you return from the scene of the crime you must come directly here and tell me what you have been able to discover. I will remain waiting for you."

"Very well, Mrs. Rohnwald, I will do so."

"And, not only so, but you will remain here all night, since the hour will be so very late, perhaps."

"That will suit me, if it is convenient for you, madam. At any rate I will come in and tell you what we are able to learn. I only hope we can find a clue to the assassin there."

The coroner and some of his men were presently ready, some remaining behind to assist the doctor; and under the leadership of Broadway Billy they set out for the place where the body had been discovered in quest of a clue to the heinous crime.

CHAPTER VIII.

MAKING AN ARREST.

LET a detective from the city put in his appearance at any country village, and be known as such, and he is looked upon as nothing less than a little god.

At the gate, as they came out of the grounds of Woodlawn Manor, was quite a crowd, and as the word was quietly passed that Broadway Billy, the detective, from New York, was with them, Billy became the object of all attention, and was looked upon with a reverence akin to awe.

"What is this I hear?" asked one man, a man past middle age, who had just come up. "Gus Rohnwald killed!"

"Yes, Daddy Goodluck," the coroner made answer, "and we are just goin' to see if we can't find some clue to the crime. Come along with us: we want you."

Broadway Billy guessed at once, and correctly, that this was the old station-agent, remembering the name Mrs. Rohnwald had mentioned.

"This is awful news," the old man remarked. "I couldn't believe it when I heard it. And they say the body was found on the railroad, too, and that it had been run over."

"Yes; it was run over by the Flyer, and they stopped and took it up and carried it to the station. The poor fellow had been killed and then tied fast to the track, and—"

"Hello! what's all this crowd for? What's the matter, boys?"

So exclaimed and inquired a young man who just then met them as they were moving up the street.

"Haven't ye heard, Dolph?" one man of the party asked.

"No; what is it? Must be something serious, by the looks of things. What, you in it, Coroner Parkerburg?"

"Yes; there's been a murder done, Dolph—"

"Murder! Who's been killed?"

"Gus Rohnwald."

"Good heavens! you don't mean to tell me that. Where—when was he killed? I saw him late this afternoon, and— But, where was the body found?"

"It was found tied to the railroad track

down around the curve in the woods, and when the Flyer came along it ran over the body and cut it in two. But he had been killed before that, for his skull was broke and—"

"I'll bet it was the tramp. I saw him—"

"My God!" ejaculated the old station-agent, "I had forgot the tramp!"

"What—what's this?" the coroner hurriedly inquired. "Who seen the tramp? What about him?"

"Why," the young man explained, "I was riding horseback out in the direction of Hope-dale this afternoon, and when I was on the other side of the railroad bank at the place where the brook runs under, I saw a tramp on top of the bank. He had a long staff in his hand, one that was peeled white about half way of its length, and he was shaking it at something or somebody on the other side, and was shouting. Then I heard a voice answer him, and I recognized it as Gus Rohnwald's. He was ordering the fellow to move on, and the tramp was defying him. I didn't pay much attention to it."

"The same tramp," said the old station-agent. "I remember the staff you mentioned, peeled white half-way up. I took notice of him as he passed the station, and I thought then he was a ugly customer, sure as I'm a sinner saved by grace. And then when he had got a ways past I noticed his walk—"

But just there the old man stopped short, interrupting himself with a fit of coughing.

"You noticed his walk?" the coroner repeated interrogatively, as soon as the fit of coughing had ceased.

"Ye—yes," the old man said, hesitatingly; "I—I noticed that he walked— That is to say, he walked right in that direction."

The old man had recollected the similarity he had noticed in the tramp's walk to that of his young friend, the absent Robert Rohnwald, and had almost let it out, when he thought what suspicion it might cast upon the young man.

And, being urged to finish what he had started to say, he hardly knew how to get around the point, for his good Christian tongue was stranger to a lie, and his hesitation was noticed by all. It was noticed, too, now, that he appeared to be somewhat disturbed in manner.

"Did you see the tramp when you came back, Dolph?" the coroner inquired.

"Yes, I did," was the prompt answer. "I was just going to tell you about that, too. I came back by the wood path that crosses down below the station and comes along by the brook and on out behind Woodlawn Manor, and when I came along by the stone wall behind the manor I saw a fellow asleep on the ground in the moonlight, and I took him to be the same tramp. I didn't stop to bother with him, but rode on about my business and went up home and put up my horse and thought no more about it; but now it all comes back to me, since you tell me what has taken place. I'll tell you what, let's go right there, and if the fellow isn't gone arrest him on suspicion anyhow."

"Just what I was going to propose," cried the coroner, eagerly. "We'll make sure of him if we can, and if he is innocent it won't be any harm done. What do you think of it, Mr. Weston?"

"That's the proper thing to do," Billy agreed. "If the tramp did the deed it will prove a very simple case, for we can no doubt put the crime on him fast enough."

The young man called Dolph looked at Billy keenly while he was speaking, and turning to the coroner, asked:

"Who is this young gentleman, Mr. Parkerburg?"

"Him?" said the coroner, with pride unconcealed. "Why, he's Mr. Weston, the detective, from New York; him they call Broadway Billy."

The young man looked the amazement he felt, for a moment.

"A detective?" he ejaculated. "Broadway Billy! Really, this is fortunate, at such a time. Glad to know you, Mr. Weston," giving his hand; "my name is Adolphus Greenwood. By what good fortune are you here at this time?"

Billy had taken the offered hand.

"I happened to be called on another matter of business," he explained, briefly. "My visit would have been a secret one, but for this terrible affair. I was at Mrs. Rohnwald's when the body was brought home, and so, naturally, the case fell to me to solve."

"Then Mrs. Rohnwald had called you in regard to the lost will, I suppose."

"Yes, that was it; since it can no longer be a secret and no harm can be done by letting it out. But, lead the way to where you saw that

tramp; we must get him if he has not already given us the slip."

"Yes, we'll turn just ahead here. A curious case, that of the will; but, I don't think there can be much question as to who took it; I think the suspicion has been put where it rightfully belongs. Rob Rohnwald is the guilty one, and I'll be willing to bet on it."

"Never!" cried Peter Goodluck, promptly.

"I say he's innocent, and that I'll stick to till the day I die. Rob Rohnwald was not that sort. I knew him as well as anybody here at Roseford, and maybe better, too, and I know he couldn't do anything of that kind. It wasn't in him. I knew Robby."

"Well, you are to be respected for your firm belief in him, anyhow, Daddy," Greenwood observed. "Still, you can't deny that appearances are dark against him in the matter."

"I don't care a straw if they are black as a bottomless pit, Dolph Greenwood; that wouldn't never make me change my mind."

"Well, it's to be hoped you are right, that's all. Here's where we turn, Mr. Weston."

"How far to where the man was seen?" Billy asked.

"About an eighth of a mile."

"Let every man be still, then," Billy ordered, "and let the lantern be put out, or carried well behind the man ahead of it. You lead the way, Mr. Greenwood; and you, Mr. Parkerburg, make the arrest."

"Oh, no!" the coroner cried quickly: "that is for you to do. You are the one to do that."

"Very well, if you desire it so. Silent all, now."

So, in silence they proceeded, Billy and Greenwood some yards in advance of the others.

The way was a broad wood-path, curving in from the main road and skirting along the wall in the rear of the manor-house of the Rohnwald estate.

Presently a point was reached where Greenwood showed more caution, and then in a moment more they came to some great trees where the ground underneath was covered with a soft, velvety sward.

"Soon, then, Greenwood stopped short, and catching Broadway Billy by the arm, pointed ahead on the right, where, in the border of the moonlight, lay a man.

"There he is," he whispered, "just where I saw him."

"I see him," said Billy. "Follow me now, all, and be on hand to hear what he has to say when he wakes up."

This was spoken to the others as well as to Greenwood, they having come up with their leaders now; and having so said, Billy went ahead toward the tramp.

He took a pair of handcuffs from his left hip pocket as he advanced, and on coming to the spot where the tramp lay, caught hold of the fellow's hands, and snapped the bracelets on his wrists before he awoke.

The rest of the party came right up, and were circled around the tramp by the time he opened his eyes and stared around him in a dazed manner.

This was but momentary, and the tramp essayed to rise, suddenly and with a great start. His hands being manacled, though, he fell back, and as he did so he held up his wrists to see what held them together.

"My God!" he cried. "What is the meaning of this, men? What—what—what—"

"It's Rob Rohnwald!"

So cried several in the crowd, speaking at once. They had recognized the voice.

Broadway Billy gave a start, in spite of himself, at this unexpected denouement, while old Peter Goodluck turned away with a choking sob, covering his eyes with his hands.

Billy's duty was plain, and he did not hesitate.

"It means, sir," he said sternly to the half-bewildered tramp, "that you are under arrest for the murder of Gustav Rohnwald. Take—"

With a bound the seeming tramp was upon his feet instantly, somehow, and he cried out wildly:

"Gus Rohnwald dead—murdered! It cannot be; I saw him late in the afternoon alive and well! And I—I—am accused of having killed him! Oh! God, this is too much to bear! Men, I—"

"Take care what you say, sir," Broadway Billy continued the caution he had been on the point of giving, "for whatever words you utter now will be used against you later. Mr. Greenwood, is this the man you saw on the railroad bank this afternoon? And you, Peter Goodluck, is it the man you saw passing your station?"

"Yes, it is the same person," answered Greenwood, boldly; but the old station-agent, pale and trembling, waved his hand as though to force back the question, crying out at the same time: "Do not ask me, do not ask me! I cannot swear it is the same person; how could I? Do not ask me, I beg of you."

CHAPTER IX.

CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE.

SOME facts had been driven home in Broadway Billy's mind, quickly, swiftly, surely.

First, that this tramp was recognized by his voice as Rob Rohnwald; next, that he had been seen by at least two persons on that afternoon; then, that the old station-agent had thought he recognized him at the time.

If, then, he was Robert Rohnwald he was only twenty-six years old, and must be in disguise. It was a simple matter to prove that, and the young detective set about it without delay. Taking hold of the prisoner's hair he gave a slight pull, and hair and beard came off together in his hand!

"Rob Rohnwald it is!" cried the the crowd. "We knew the voice, and he is the one that did the deed."

"I am not the one who did it," the prisoner fired. "I knew not that anything had happened till you told me. I cannot believe even yet it is true."

"Let me caution you again to be careful what you say," Broadway Billy enjoined. "At present, appearances are against you, but perhaps your innocence will be proven easily enough."

Billy was of the opinion the man was innocent.

"He was a good-looking man, with a bold face and fearless eyes, and the face struck Billy as being one to be trusted."

"I swear I am innocent, sir, in spite of all," the prisoner said to him in earnest tones. "Believe me or not, it is the truth."

"But, it remains to prove you innocent," Billy rejoined. "Why are you here in such a disguise as this?"

"Because I am a fool, first and foremost," was the forceful rejoinder.

"And do you admit your identity as Robert Rohnwald?"

"All these men know me well."

"Yes, we all know him," spoke up the coroner. "And, it appears very dark indeed against him. Robert Rohnwald, you said you saw your half-brother late this afternoon; where was it?"

"Down by the trout pools, by the railroad bank. He was fishing when I came along, and I stopped to watch him a moment. He made a catch and I spoke to him, and he recognized me. Fool that I was to think I could carry out the character I assumed! I might have known I could not do it."

"But, why did you come here like this?"

"In order to see how things stood here, and then go away again unknown if I found it better to do so."

"Well, Mr. Greenwood here, who saw you this afternoon, says he heard you and your half-brother having words. It looks bad for you, now, and I only hope you can clear yourself."

"Let us go on to the scene of the crime," suggested Broadway Billy. "This arrest does not excuse us from that duty. If this man is innocent, as he declares he is, we may find something more there. What we are after is the truth, no matter what it is."

"And this is the nearest way to the scene, from here," said Greenwood. "Come on. I only hope suspicion can be swept away from this man. It does not seem possible that he can be the murderer."

"Shall we bring the prisoner with us?" asked the coroner.

"Yes, may as well," Billy answered.

They set forward, then, Billy again warning the prisoner to take care what he said, and in due time reached the pools.

Here the moon shed its full, strong light, and the whole scene was shown as clearly, almost, as by daylight. And, almost the first object to draw the attention of the quick-sighted detective was a stout staff, one with the bark peeled off it one half its length.

Springing forward, Billy picked this up and looked at it, carefully.

Near one end he speedily discovered a stain of blood, with some hairs with it, proof that this was the weapon with which the deed had been done.

"Is this the staff you saw the prisoner have?" Billy asked of Greenwood.

"I should say it is, sir," was the reply.

"Oh Robby, my poor boy, my poor boy!" muttered the old station-agent.

"And it is the same one you saw him carry when he passed your station, is it, Mr. Good-luck?"

"I cannot swear that it is, sir, I cannot swear that it is," was the eager effort at evasion. "How do you suppose I can, sir?"

Billy did not press the question, seeing how painful it was to the old man and knowing full well the reason, but turned his attention to looking further about on the ground.

Suddenly he stooped and picked up something which he put in his pocket.

"What have you found there?" inquired Greenwood.

"Something which may prove useful in the case," Billy answered. "I do not care to make it known now."

He looked further, it being unnecessary to use the lantern in his search, for the moonlight was so strong that it cast a shadow of the lantern on the ground; and in a few minutes he discovered what he wanted.

That was, the trail leading away from the scene.

This trail led along by the bottom of the embankment till it came to the end of the fill, where it went up in the rain-washed gully that formed the line between the natural bank and the fill.

Billy was not following the trail of blood now so closely as he was following the heavy foot-prints that went with it, and just here they were very plainly marked.

"Stop," he ordered those behind him. "Do not spoil these tracks, for they may prove the whole case for or against the prisoner."

He went up the bank, taking care not to mar one of the tracks, the others going further around in order to get up.

When he reached the top of the bank, which there was not very high, Billy recognized at once the spot where the body had been tied to the rails, only a little way distant down the track, at a place where the ground was level.

He went no further, having already looked well around there.

He indicated the spot to the others, and many of them went forward to it, among them Dolph Greenwood and the coroner.

The old station-agent remained behind with those who had the prisoner in keeping, and as soon as the greater part of the company had left them, he eagerly asked,

"Rob, tell me, are you guilty of this crime?"

"Daddy Goodluck, I am not," was the firm answer, clearly spoken.

"Thank God for that," the old man said, devoutly. "I have your word; now come what may, I believe you innocent."

"You know me, Daddy; you know me as only one other in the world does; and I tell you candidly and sincerely, that I left Gus there by the pools, alive and well, and I have not seen him since."

"I believe you, dark as appearances are against you, I believe you."

And so, too, did Broadway Billy.

He had noted the prisoner's manner and words when first charged with the terrible crime, and had there and then adjudged him innocent.

If not, then he was a most perfect actor, and other circumstances went to indicate that he was far from being that. He had not been actor enough to carry out his assumed character of tramp.

Then, too, if guilty, was it likely that he would have remained there so near the scene of the crime, and that he could have lain down and gone soundly to sleep? It did not look reasonable to the mind of the young detective. Still, he could not deny how terribly appearances were against him.

"Mr. Rohnwald," he now said to him, "I want one of your boots for a moment. If you are innocent these tracks are not yours, for they are the tracks of the man who brought the body up from the pools there and tied it to the rail."

"Ha! that is so," the prisoner cried, as with a sudden burst of hope. "Take it and put it to the test."

He threw himself upon the ground as he spoke, and held up his foot that the boot might be removed.

Billy laid hold upon it and drew it off, and by that time the others were returning.

"What now?" asked the coroner.

"I'm going to see if the prisoner's boot fits these tracks," Billy answered.

"Ha! I had not thought of that. That will tell for or ag'inst him, sure as kin be."

Billy took the boot and tested it in some of the

nearest of the tracks, the others looking on as he did so, eagerly awaiting his verdict.

But, they did not get it.

When he looked up, presently, it was to say:

"Here, gentlemen, take the boot and fit it to the tracks yourselves, and say what you think. You, Mr. Parkerburg, are the man to do this."

"But, you are a detective, sir," the coroner argued.

"And you are the coroner in charge of the matter," Billy reminded.

This touched Mr. Parkerburg upon his official pride, and taking the boot, he proceeded to do as he had seen Billy doing.

"I swear!" he presently ejaculated, "it fits the track."

"Let me see, if you please," requested Greenwood. "I hope I can show that it don't."

He took the boot and followed the example of the others, but when he rose it was with a shake of the head, and he handed the boot to Billy without saying anything.

Others made the same test, and it was agreed that the boot did fit the tracks.

"But, what is your opinion of it, Mr. Weston?" the coroner inquired.

"The boot is certainly about the same size as the track," Billy had to admit.

"Then fate is against me," sighed the prisoner. "I swear to you that I was neither up nor down the bank at this place. I went down yonder nearer the bridge, and I did not go up again at all."

"Then you admit that you did go down to the place where your half-brother was standing, do you?" asked the coroner.

"Yes, I admit that. You can find my tracks there where I went down."

The coroner shook his head in a dubious way.

Billy helped the prisoner on with his boot, and then assisted him to his feet, when he gave him over to the coroner.

"What is your opinion in the case?" the coroner asked.

"It is needless for a man of your age and experience to ask that of me, sir," was all the answer Billy made.

It certainly looked like a case all too plain, and in sorrowful silence the little company wended its way back to the village, where the justice of the peace was called up and the prisoner was properly committed to jail to await his examination on the morrow. And while that was being done, Broadway Billy went to the Woodlawn Manor to report to Mrs. Rohnwald, as he had promised to do.

CHAPTER X.

GROWING DARKER.

BILLY found the lady awaiting his return, and her daughter with her, in the little back sitting-room where he had before had the interview with her.

The faces of both looked haggard and worn, and the girl's eyes showed signs of weeping.

"Well, what have you been able to learn, Mr. Weston?" the woman asked.

"That it was undoubtedly a case of murder, madam," was the reply; "and, an arrest has already been made."

"An arrest already!" exclaimed the girl.

"Who is it?"

"It is a tramp—"

The girl clasped her hands and sunk back in her chair with a moan.

Billy grasped the truth at once. She had known of the presence of Robert in his disguise; perhaps had an interview with him.

"What do you know about this tramp, Miss Gilbert?" he demanded.

"Nothing, sir, nothing. Oh! it is so terrible, to think of his having been killed by a tramp. But, are you sure the tramp did it?"

"Do not think to deceive me, Miss Gilbert," said Billy, gently. "The identity of this tramp is known, and I know by your words and actions that you knew of his presence here."

"And do you think him guilty?" asked Mrs. Rohnwald, quietly.

"I want it understood that I do think him guilty," Billy answered.

The young lady gave a groan at that, covering her face with her hands, and a sob shook her frame.

"But," Billy added, "I am going to take you ladies into my confidence and tell you, secretly, that I believe Robert Rohnwald entirely innocent of this crime. I intend to exert myself to the utmost to prove him so."

"Thank heaven!" cried the young woman, in a hushed whisper, and she threw herself upon her knees before Billy, clasping his right hand in both of hers and looking up into his face. "Only

prove Robert innocent, Mr. Weston, and I will bless you, evermore!"

"Carlotta!" the mother chided. "You forget yourself."

The girl was already resuming her seat.

"No, mamma, I do not," she made reply. "I was overjoyed at hearing Mr. Weston say he believes in Robert's innocence, in spite of all appearances."

"Yes; but perhaps he does not know just how dark the appearances are against the prisoner. He cannot know what you have disclosed to me—"

"Oh mamma! you promised not to reveal that to any one!"

"Useless to try to keep it back from Mr. Weston, dear. He has already guessed that you know something important, and he has been able to see by my manner that you have told me all about it."

All of which was quite true, of course.

"But, mamma, it will hang Robert, as sure as it comes to the knowledge of the jury."

"Perhaps it may not be necessary that it should be known further. Since we have heard Mr. Weston declare his belief in the innocence of Robert, we know we can trust him. I shall tell him what you saw and overheard, and let him say what he thinks about it."

"It were better so," said the young detective. "The fuller the understanding I have of the whole matter, the better I can work upon the case."

The young lady bowed her head, and her mother said:

"What we refer to, Mr. Weston, is something which my daughter and I had made up our minds to keep secret. She had told me all about it before you came in. But, as I said, now that we know you are for Robert I will disclose it to you."

"This afternoon my daughter was out walking in the wood, and her walk took her down by the trout pools near the railroad bridge. As she drew near there she heard voices, one of which she recognized as Gustav's. She went on, and a few steps brought her to a place where she could peer through the bushes, and there she stopped, in fear, for two men were quarreling, and she recognized the voices of both, now."

"One was Gustav and the other was Robert Rohnwald, and Carlo! a saw that Robert was in disguise as a tramp, and that he had a big stick in his hand, one that was peeled half-way of its length. This stick he was shaking menacingly at Gustav, and Carlotta heard him say in words of hot passion: 'Take it back, or I'll strike you to the ground where you stand! Take it back, or as I live I will kill you!' And being terribly frightened, Carlotta ran away from the spot as fast as she could, fearing that if her presence became known to the rivals it might precipitate a deadly strife between them."

Broadway Billy had clinched tight his hands, as he heard this, and he fixed his eyes upon the floor, a heavy frown upon his brow.

Here was damning evidence against the man in whose innocence he had declared his belief. Was Robert Rohnwald, after all, a more perfect actor than he had given him credit for being?

"What do you think?" asked the young lady, eagerly. "What you have heard has not changed your mind, I hope!"

"It is evidence which would hang him," Billy said. "I only hope I can clear it away so as to make it of none effect, for I am still of the mind that Robert is innocent."

"Thank God!"

"And you will not compel Carlotta to tell this story at the inquest, will you, Mr. Weston?" asked the mother.

"I will not, as I am not working against Robert now, but for him," Billy answered. "I can understand how terrible a trial that would be for her, loving him as she does."

"It would kill me!" the girl declared.

"I am in the case with the belief that Robert Rohnwald is innocent," Billy said, musingly. "Why would he tie his victim to the railroad track, after he had killed him, if guilty? Something I do not pretend to understand, that. No; I am still firmly of the belief in his innocence, though the case against him is terribly dark."

"You have not told us how you found Robert," reminded Mrs. Rohnwald.

"True, but I intend doing so, now. It was with the help of another witness that we—"

"Another witness!" cried the young lady. "Then—"

"One who saw the tramp on the railroad bank," Billy explained, "and heard him in an altercation with Gustav. He met us as we were going out to the scene of the tragedy,

and having heard nothing about the death of Gustav Rohnwald, asked where we were going and what was the matter, seeing the coroner with us.

"He was told, and the moment he heard Gustav had been killed he mentioned the tramp he had seen and told what he knew. More, he had seen the tramp again, later, and knew where he was asleep in the woods, and guided us to him. We made the arrest, and it was then discovered who the tramp really was, and the case against him at once looked darker than ever.

"Mr. Greenwood recog—"

"Mr. Greenwood!" the young lady exclaimed, interrupting. "What Mr. Greenwood was that?"

"Mr. Adolphus Greenwood."

"Ha! How I hate him! Did he know who the tramp was, before the arrest?"

"No; he was as much surprised as any one there. But, you say you hate him; may I ask why you hate him?"

"It does not matter, sir, since it is nothing which can concern this terrible affair. I prefer not to tell, if you please."

"You should guard your tongue a little better, Carlotta," said the mother, reprovingly. "Since you have said so much I shall have to explain the matter to Mr. Weston."

"As you think best, mamma."

"It is like this, sir," the mother said: "Mr. Greenwood has been seeking to marry Carlotta, and not liking him, she has come to hate him for his persistence in the matter."

"Ah! I see. Well, as I was about to say, Mr. Greenwood recognized the tramp as the same one he had seen on the railroad bank earlier in the evening, or rather in the afternoon; and Mr. Goodluck, who was with us, recognized him as one he had seen pass the station that afternoon. That good old man tried to hide what he knew, but his efforts to do so only made it the more plain. We went to the railroad bank from there, and on the rocks by the trout pools we found the half-peeled club, and it had blood and hair on it as proof that it had been the weapon used by the assassin."

"He is lost—lost!" cried the young lady, wringing her hands.

"From there," Billy proceeded, "we followed to where the body had been tied on the railroad track, and the tracks in the clayey earth fitted well the boot the tramp had on. We took one of them off, and all present were satisfied that he was the one who had carried the body up there. I never saw a case so plain, taking a general view of it; and yet, from certain facts I have picked up, and from ideas I have formed, and impressions that have been made upon my mind, I still think Robert innocent, and I hope to prove him so. But, as I said, this is to you privately. Openly, I want it to appear that I am against the young man, for the present."

"He is lost, lost, lost!" cried Miss Gilbert, still wringing her hands.

"Do not despair," said her mother. "Mr. Weston has made a reputation as a detective, and we know he would not say what he does without some good grounds to support his opinion. Still, how terribly dark it is! Prejudiced minds will see in it only a desire to have Gustav out of the way in order to come in for the whole estate, and to have him out of the way as a rival for the hand of my child here. How little they understand him! No, Robert is not guilty of this; I cannot believe it; he could never do such a deed, unless—"

"Unless what, madam?"

"I was about to say, unless Gustav attacked him and he fought to defend himself, and unintentionally struck him a blow that killed him."

"Not so," said Billy. "The blow was intended to kill; no doubting that part of it. But, if Robert did do it, for sake of argument let us suppose, why did he put the body on the track? And, too, why did he remain here in the wood, when the discovery was bound to come early and his chances for escape would be slim indeed after it was known that the victim had been murdered. And, why did he leave his staff at the place of the crime, direct evidence against him? And, could he lie down as we found him and sleep soundly immediately after committing so hellish a deed? Never! I give you these points for your comfort; do not repeat them. You will see, in part, why I believe him innocent."

"God bless you for your cheering words!" cried the young lady.

"And do you exert yourself to the utmost to bring the truth to light," urged Mrs. Rohnwald.

"That I shall do, never fear," Billy promised.

"And now, if you will allow me, I will assume a disguise before leaving the house again. I have work to do, but you can let the impression be that I spend the night here."

With a few hasty touches the detective disguised himself so completely right there in the presence of the two ladies that they could hardly believe the same person stood before them. And that done, he went out into the night by a rear way, to perform whatever task he had in mind.

CHAPTER XI.

BILLY'S SILENT SEARCH.

ON the following morning Broadway Billy breakfasted at Woodlawn Manor, and a little time later came forth from the house and made his way in the direction of the railroad station.

He was without disguise, and no sooner had he made his appearance than he was seen, and men in the street pointed him out to one another as the detective who was in town for the purpose of clearing up the Roseford mystery.

Quite a number followed him to the station, keeping at a distance behind him, feasting their eyes upon what was to them a treat, a genuine and real live detective; and Billy had to smile to himself as he noted what interest his presence created in the rural mind.

Reaching the station, he found old Peter Goodluck in the office at work upon some report or other for the company.

He recognized Billy at once, and opening the door of the office, said:

"Come in here, sir, for I want to talk with you."

"Thank you," said Billy, as he accepted.

The office was of good size for a country station, and at a table in the bow window sat a young man who was working the telegraph.

"I want to talk with you about this awful matter here at Roseford," the old man said as he closed the door. "You needn't mind the operator; he is my son."

"That is all right," responded Billy. "I'm willing to talk with you, sir; but before I do so I want to send a message to New York. You send messages from here, I suppose, of course?"

"Yes; just write out what you want to say, and Harry there will send it for you."

So, Billy wrote out a message in cipher, addressing it to—

"HILLYARD & MARTEN,

"Room No. —,

"No. — Broadway,

"New York City."

That message, as the reader will recognize at once, was to his "team," Happy Harry and Silent Seth.

The operator counted the words it contained, stated the amount due, and as soon as Billy had settled with him he turned again to the old man.

"Well, Mr. Goodluck," he asked, "is there something you want to inquire about in particular?"

"Yes, young man, there is," was the response. "I want to ask ye, right out as a man, if you think there is any hope for Rob Rohnwald."

"The case is very dark against him, Mr. Goodluck," Billy evaded. "You can see for yourself just how it stands. Of course, after the inquest we may be able to understand it better."

"Yes, I see how it is, sir; but I want to say to you right here that I will never believe Rob Rohnwald done that deed, not if he was to confess to it I wouldn't; he ain't that kind. I have knowed Robby from a boy up, and he's as good and true as his mother was before him."

"Then he is the victim of circumstantial evidence the most unfortunate, Mr. Goodluck, is all I can say. I certainly hope he will be able to clear himself, but at present that is almost like hoping against hope."

"I know it, I know it; but I'll believe the boy's story, no matter what the proof against him is, after what he said to me last night. No matter what comes, even if they hang him, to me he is innocent and I wanted to let you know just how much faith I have in him."

"I am glad to see you so strongly on the weak side, Mr. Goodluck. I only wish he had a few more such friends. The man who sets about proving his innocence has got to work against the whole field, however, and will have no easy task before him. Now, as you believe Rob innocent, is there any one else you can suspect of having done the deed?"

"Not a single one, sir. God forgive me if I

should mention any name without some proof to back up the suspicion with."

"Then do I understand you to hint that you might throw suspicion upon some one else if you would—"

"No, sir; no, sir; you don't understand me to say anything of the kind."

"Oh! Well, excuse me, then, Mr. Goodluck; but, there are some questions I would like to ask you, if you don't mind."

"What are they?"

"About what time was it when Rob Rohnwald passed here yesterday afternoon?"

"I should say it was about five o'clock, as near as I might guess; not many minutes before or after, anyhow."

"That is near enough to it, since you do not know the exact time. Now, did you notice Mr. Adolphus Greenwood going by the station here after that, on the road out yonder?"

"No, I did not; but that don't signify, for he might 'a' gone a hundred times and not be seen o' me."

"Well, can you tell me who it is drives a horse and a mule together, with a very broad-tired wagon?"

"Yes, that's Silas Barringer."

"And I saw him come along that road about seven o'clock," spoke up the operator.

"That road is not traveled much, I take it," Billy observed.

"No, not very much. But, what are you coming at, young man? You wouldn't cast no suspicion on Silas Barringer, would you?"

"Far from it," Billy made reply. "I was merely getting at the time in a certain point I have in mind, that was all. But, I'm afraid the case is going against the young man in spite of all."

"It looks that way. Foolish boy he was to come here in such a manner."

"Yes; for that very fact will tell terribly against him. And then the fact that the murder was done with the club he carried."

"Yes, yes; and the tracks up the bank, which his boots seemed to fit so well— Poor Rob! I would almost lay down my old life to save him, I believe; yes, I would do it, and willin'ly, for I know he is innocent."

"But, you can't offer anything to prove it."

"Not a thing, not a thing."

Billy talked a little longer with the old man, drew out some more points he was after, and went away.

He bent his steps in the direction of the village proper again, and when he reached the hotel of the place he met Dolph Greenwood.

"Good-morning," Greenwood greeted.

"Learned anything more?"

"Nothing more of any importance," Billy answered.

"Been out to the scene of the crime this morning?"

"Why, were you going out that way?"

"I thought I would. Daylight is stronger than moonlight, and there may be something to discover."

"I am satisfied with my examination of the ground last night," said Billy, "but if you want to go out that way I'll walk with you. I suppose there is a crowd on the spot by this time, though."

"That's so, no doubt there is; but, they can't carry it away with them, that is sure."

"Come on, then. Have you seen the coroner this morning?"

"Yes, and he is all broke up over the matter. I guess it is the first bad case he ever had."

"What time does he begin his inquest?"

"At half-past nine, I believe."

"We can be back in time for that. I want to be on hand to hear and see. I suppose the fellow is guilty, sure enough."

"I don't see any doubt of it. He and Gus hated each other, and Gus had the inside track of him all around, both in property and love matters. With Gus out of the way he would have the whole thing to himself."

"Yes, that's true, sure enough. But, why, do you suppose, did he tie the body to the rails?"

"Don't see, unless he wanted it to be sure to be found, so there could be no question about Gus's being dead."

"If that was his object, I should think he would have merely laid it on the track, to give the impression that it had been an accident."

"I don't pretend to be able to guess his motive, but maybe he wanted it to appear as a murder, out and out, hoping to be able to prove his innocence of it. He was in a good disguise, you know."

"Yes; but he kept the disguise still on, and went and lay down in the wood to sleep. Besides, he left his staff at the place where the

deed was done, and by putting the body on the rail he invited early discovery and his own arrest."

"That's all so," the young man admitted. "It puzzles me."

"Isn't it just possible that he may be innocent, and that some one else did the deed?"

"I only wish it could be proven so, Mr. Weston, but it looks to me like an impossible task. Everybody is against him, you see."

"That is nothing. If any proof of his innocence could be shown, everybody would be as strongly for him, except perhaps his personal enemies, if he has any such."

"Well, perhaps you are right."

"Have you ever heard what the trouble was between him and his father?"

"No, nothing further than that Rob and his step-mother could not get on well, and the old man had it in for him on that account."

But, at the time of Rob's going away they are said to have had a quarrel."

The same old story, I guess. If anything more I do not know of it."

They talked on, Billy drawing out all he could get, in a careful way, and in due time they came to the scene of the crime.

Here, as Billy had prophesied, was a good crowd, half the men and boys of the village being congregated there, it appeared, all searching eagerly around and all talking wisely.

"Do you want to be seen?" asked Greenwood, as they peeped through the bushes.

"No, it isn't worth while," Billy answered. "I've got all I could learn here, so we may as well walk back."

They turned, and as they did so Billy's eye caught a bit of cloth on one of the bushes. Greenwood, too, seemed to see it at the same instant, for he reached forth and took it.

"Hello!" he exclaimed, "here is something. It is a bit of a woman's dress, and— By Harry! I recognize the stuff; it is like the dress Carlotta Gilbert wore when I saw her yesterday. What do you make of this, Mr. Weston? What ought we to do with it? I suppose I'll have to turn it over to the coroner, much as I hate to do that."

CHAPTER XII.

THE INQUEST AND THE VERDICT.

THE inquest was begun promptly at half-past nine.

An intelligent jury had been got together by the town constable, and they assembled in one of the great parlors of the manor-house.

The room was well filled with the town's good citizens, and the prisoner having been brought from the jail occupied a prominent seat. He was still in his tramp's attire.

He had washed and combed, however, and was by long odds the finest-looking man in the company. He had dark curly hair, a graceful mustache, keen dark eyes and even teeth of purest white. He looked anything but a murderer, yet he was looked upon as such.

The coroner began the business of the hour promptly at the time set, and the first witness called was Peter Goodluck.

"Mr. Goodluck," the coroner asked, "do you recognize this prisoner as the man you saw passing your station late yesterday afternoon, in full disguise as a tramp?"

"I do not," was the firm and prompt answer.

"You do not?"

"No, sir."

"But, last night at the time of the arrest you showed by your actions plainly enough that you did recognize him."

"I tell you now that I do not recognize him. The tramp I saw had bushy hair and beard, for one thing, which this prisoner has not, sir."

It was plain that Daddy Goodluck meant to favor the prisoner if possible.

"Well, do you recognize this wig and beard as the one he had on?" holding up to view the disguise Robert had worn.

"I can't say that I do; the tramp did not stop and I only saw him as he passed."

"Did that man carry a staff?"

"Yes."

"Is this the one he carried?"

"That is impossible for me to say; it looks like it."

"Prisoner, you will please put on this disguise, take the staff, and stand up," the coroner ordered.

Robert Rohnwald complied.

"Now, Mr. Goodluck, is this the tramp you saw yesterday?"

"I can't swear that it is, sir."

"Does he look like the tramp you saw?"

"Yes," very reluctantly.

"That is what the gentlemen of the jury want to know. Now, sir, how long after the tramp

passed was it that Miss Carlotta Gilbert came to the station?"

Broadway Billy gave a start of surprise, and the young lady and her mother looked at each other in something of alarm.

How had the coroner come by this knowledge of Miss Gilbert's movements?

Billy quickly reasoned it out, however. Dolph Greenwood had turned over to the coroner the bit of cloth he had found, and no doubt the coroner had made inquiry and found some one who had seen the girl at the station.

"How do you know she was there?" asked the old agent, embarrassed.

"That does not matter, long as I do know it," the coroner rejoined. "Please answer the question."

The poor old man looked at the young lady and then at the prisoner, helplessly, and said:

"It might have been twenty minutes after; I don't know."

"What was her manner? Did she appear to be excited?"

"She had come close to being run over, and she was pale and excited like, naturally."

"Of course. Did she tell you which way she had come?"

With another helpless look at the young lady and the prisoner the old man gave his answer.

"She said she had come up through the glen."

That was all, and Dolph Greenwood was the next witness called to the stand.

Needless to give his testimony, question and answer, since it is already known to the reader, sum and substance.

The next one called was Carlotta Gilbert.

She advanced pale and trembling, and took the witness chair.

"Miss Gilbert," said the coroner, "here is a piece of goods like the dress you wore yesterday. It was found on a bush near the trout pools where Gustav Rohnwald was murdered. Can you tell the jury how it came there?"

"It must have caught as I was passing along that way," was the firm answer, though the girl was pale to the lips.

"But, it was in the bushes, a step away from the path," said the coroner.

"It may have blown there, sir."

"No; it was caught fast on the very thorn that tore it from your dress. Why had you stepped aside into the bushes?"

"I decline to answer that."

"Did you see Gustav at that time?"

"Yes."

"Did you see Robert?"

"I decline to answer."

"Did you overhear any high words?"

"I decline to answer."

"Very well, your refusals only tell against the prisoner, Miss Gilbert."

He dismissed her, well knowing he could draw nothing further from her, and called the most important witness of all, the prisoner himself.

"Robert Rohnwald," he asked, "why did you come here in this outlandish disguise?"

"So that I might not be recognized, Mr. Parkerburg," was the firm answer. "I wanted to know how matters stood here, and if I found them so that it were better for me to go away again and never return, I intended doing that, and no one would know that I had been here."

"What do you mean when you say you wanted to learn how matters stood here?"

"Well, I had heard that my father was dead, and I wanted to know how the property had been left, for one thing; but, and more important than that, to me, I wanted to learn whether Miss Gilbert had married my half-brother, or was engaged to him. If I found either to be the case, then I would go away for good and all and they would never know I had been near them."

"Why did you choose to come as a tramp? Was there no other and more respectable disguise you could have assumed?"

"I thought by coming in this manner that no person could ever guess who I was, knowing that I was not actor enough to carry out the deception any other way. But, it seems it was a most unfortunate choice."

"Did Gustav recognize you when you came along where he was fishing?"

"I stood and watched him at his sport for some moments, and when he made a catch my enthusiasm got the better of me and I applauded him. We exchanged some remarks, and he recognized my voice."

"What happened then?"

"When I was sure that he recognized me, I admitted my identity, and told him the object of my coming, and proposed that he be the one to give me the information I was seeking. I went down to where he stood, presently, and there we talked. He was in an evil mood, and

pretty soon he insulted me and I threatened him with my stick unless he took back his words. He took them back and offered an apology for them, and in a few minutes we parted, I going off into the wood, where I intended spending the night."

"And you mean to tell us you did not see him after that?"

"I did not see him after that, sir; I left him there alive and well. And, another thing, I took my staff with me, and had it with me when I lay down in the wood to sleep. It seems it was found at the scene of the crime. I have no knowledge how it came there."

The coroner looked at his jury.

"This is strange, very strange," he remarked.

"How do you account for it, sir?"

"I don't account for it," was the reply. "All I know is that I have told you the truth, and that I am innocent of the crime."

"But, Robert, we have examined, as you know, the tracks leading from the pool to the railroad bank, and they exactly fit the boots you wear. The inference is that the tracks are yours."

"They were not mine, sir."

"How can you prove they were not made by you?"

"I do not know; I do know that I am innocent of the terrible murder for which I have been arrested."

"But, all the circumstances are against you, and it must be for the jury to decide in the matter. If you are innocent, we only hope you can establish it."

Some other witnesses were then called, and then it came Dr. Graves's turn to testify.

"Have you examined carefully the body of the dead man?" asked the coroner.

"I have, sir," the answer.

"What do you find?"

"That death was caused by a blow upon the head, and it is certain the man had been dead for some time when he was run over by the cars."

That closed the coroner's inquiries, and he proceeded to charge the jury according to the evidence they had heard.

"Gentlemen of the jury," said he, "it now remains for you to decide in the matter before us. You have heard the evidence just given in your hearing. There does not seem to be much question as to the manner in which Gustav Rohnwald came to his death. That is only too evident. It couldn't be any more plainer, seems to me. He was murdered, and then his body was put on the railroad track to be run over by the cars. The question is, did Robert Rohnwald do the deed? He came here yesterday afternoon in disguise as a tramp. He was heard having words with Gustav. The prisoner admits that he threatened him. This was no doubt what Miss Gilbert overheard, that made her excited when she reached the station. Did that quarrel end in a murder? Think well of the evidence before you decide."

"Was there any motive for such a crime on the part of the prisoner? Let us see. He and Gustav had never been friends. Gustav had just come into all the property, and was in a fair way to win this lady whom they both loved. With Gustav removed, Robert would have everything his own way. Did he do the deed? If so, why did he put the body on the track and so invite discovery? And, why did he remain so near at hand, and so invite arrest? Does it not look more reasonable that he would get away from the scene of the crime as soon as possible, so as to prove he was not here at all at the time? These things are for you to consider in making up your verdict. We will now all retire and leave you to deliberate over the matter, and when you are ready you can send for me."

All left the room, then, save the jury; but they were not long in making up their minds and the coroner was recalled, and the verdict they gave was, that Gustav Rohnwald had come to his death at the hands of some person, perhaps Robert Rohnwald, who should be held for further examination.

CHAPTER XIII.

BILLY'S TEAM TAKE HOLD.

AFTER the inquest was over, Broadway Billy remained for a little time at the house, talking with Mrs. Rohnwald and her daughter.

When he went from there it was to go to the jail, where he was promptly admitted to the cell where the prisoner was confined. His name and profession were the "Open Sesame."

"Mr. Rohnwald," he said in tone that so none else might hear, "I have come for a little talk with you regarding this matter with which you

are charged. I will begin by telling you, privately, that I am convinced of your innocence. You know who I am, of course."

"Yes, Mr. Weston; and let me say that I am glad to know there is one who will believe my story in spite of appearances. I am as innocent of the crime as you are, although I may have to hang for it, for I do not see how I am going to sweep away the terrible evidence that stands arrayed against me. Do you see any hope for me?"

"I do see hope for you, Mr. Rohnwald."

"Thank God for that."

"I think I can assure you that you will be cleared at your examination."

"So soon! Then do you think I will escape trial for the murder? Your words lend me new life."

"Yes, I think you will escape the trial, for, if I am not greatly mistaken, another will take your place before then."

"Who is that other?"

"I cannot tell you now. You may be sure, though, that I would never give you this hope without good ground for its support. You must not mention it, however, for I want it to appear yet that I think you guilty."

"Then I'll never breathe it, Mr. Weston. I have heard of you, and I know you are a detective worthy the name."

"I want to ask a few questions, Mr. Rohnwald."

"Ask as many as you like; I'll give you straightforward and truthful answers to them all."

"When you came here yesterday you were aware that your father was dead?"

"I was."

"Did you know anything about the will he had left?"

"No; that was a part of the matter I wanted to learn about; how he had left the property."

"Good. Now, were you aware of any secret recess anywhere in the wall at the manor-house?"

"No, I never knew of such a place."

"Never heard your father speak of such a place?"

"No, sir."

"Well, there was such a place; a small niche in the wall above the mantel in the library, and in it your father's will was hid."

"Gustav mentioned yesterday that the will had been stolen, and he accused me of the theft. I have since found that such is the general opinion here in the village. A good opinion my old friends have of me, truly."

"Yes, that suspicion is against you, as well as this of the murder. It was upon that case I was called here by Mrs. Rohnwald, who wanted the will recovered and the truth brought to light concerning it. She did not think you guilty, understand me. But, she wanted the truth."

"Perfectly right; I am glad she took that step. When was the will stolen?"

Billy gave him the date, and he was thoughtful for a moment.

"Hal the date is a fortunate one for me!" he presently exclaimed. "I can easily prove where I was that night."

"I am glad to hear it. If you can prove that, the present case will be weakened against you by half."

"And I can prove it. I attended the wedding of a friend of mine in Washington as best man."

"Excellent! Now there is light ahead, sure enough. Keep this to yourself for the present. We will hold back our heavy guns for the examination."

"Just as you say."

"Who is your lawyer?"

"Mr. Percival. I have sent for him."

"He is inclined to think you guilty, with the rest, I believe."

"What makes you think that?"

"He did not want Mrs. Rohnwald to employ a detective, having in mind the honor of the family name and your safety together."

"Some influence has been at work here against me, Mr. Weston, during the time I have been absent, to change everybody so against me. Men who knew me well should know better of me."

"For instance, the old station-agent."

"Yes; he is true."

"And you will see the whole town swing around on your side, too, as soon as we get down to business."

"I hope so."

"I know it. But, if Mr. Percival is to handle your case we must take him into our confidence. I will go and see him immediately, before he comes to see you, and will have a talk with him. He was at the inquest, and looked very distressed."

"It was enough to make anybody look blue."

"You are right; but, it will presently make somebody else look not only blue, but green and yellow all around in spots as well."

At that the prisoner smiled, and after a few words more Billy took his leave and went in quest of the lawyer.

He was closeted with him for half an hour or more, and when he left, the lawyer looked decidedly brighter than when he had come.

After that Broadway Billy disappeared.

He had been seen at the hotel, but no one could say just what had become of him.

This was strange, too, for the worthy citizens of the village had been keeping him under their eyes pretty closely, to note his doings.

But, he was gone, and no one knew how, when or where.

It was in the afternoon that a stranger was seen at the station, pacing the platform as though awaiting a train.

No one knew him, and little attention was paid to him, for a stranger at a railroad station, anywhere, is no strange sight; for there, if anywhere, strangers are to be encountered.

This stranger was a solidly built man, perhaps thirty years of age, at a casual glance, and had a full black beard.

He looked not unlike a Jew, and yet the likeness was not very pronounced. It was the black beard, no doubt, that gave the impression.

He had nothing to say to anybody, but paced to and fro attending strictly to his own business and leaving other persons in the same highly commendable occupation.

Finally a train drew up and stopped, and two young men alighted.

These looked around as if in search of some one, and they had not long to look, for the man who had been waiting rushed up to them, kissing each in turn in the true Israelitish fashion.

When the train went on the three bent their steps in the direction of the village hotel, talking eagerly and earnestly among themselves.

At the hotel the man inquired for board and lodging for a day or so, asking for a room with two beds.

He could be accommodated, and registered thus:

"Moses Cohen and Brothers, New York."

That done, he casually let out his business at Roseford, which was to look around with the idea in view of opening a clothing store there.

After some talk among themselves and others in the bar-room, asking questions concerning the prospects of their venture, and so forth, the three retired to their room.

There, as soon as the door had closed, one of the younger of the trio proceeded to stand on his head.

Is it necessary to explain that these were Broadway Billy and his "beagles?"

Billy's telegram had brought them to his aid.

As soon as Happy Harry had righted himself, and all had taken seats, Billy said:

"You answered promptly, boys, and you have carried out the role well, and I'm proud of you. Now I'll give you the case."

"And them kisses!" exclaimed Harry. "That was too good, boss. You are good at kissin', an' if I was a gal I'd set my cap for you, you bet!"

"It had to be done, to make the deception perfect," said Billy, smiling.

"Yes, I s'pose so. But, boss, let's have the case, for we are jest dyin' ter get in our fine work on it, specially Seth. He don't say much, but he is thinking as hard as ever he can."

"Well, here it is," said Billy; and, in low tone, he gave his apprentices a full and complete history of the whole matter to date.

"That feller is innocent, of course he is," declared Harry, as soon as Billy had done. "Seth thinks so, too; I kin see it in his off eye. What's more, I'll bet my hat the other feller is the guilty man."

"Mind, his name must not be breathed," cautioned Billy.

"Take me for a jay?" asked Harry.

"Hardly."

"Then don't think we're goin' out an shout our secret from the housetops, so that he that runs may get there, or whatever the quotation is; we ain't that kind; and specially Seth."

"I know I can trust both of you. Now, for the work you are to do; and you must put yourselves right down to it, to do your very best. A little slip on your part may throw all the fat in the fire, you know. My case is half complete,

and now it remains for you to help me to make it perfect."

"And we'll do it, you bet! Hey, Seth?"

The silent partner nodded.

"And, don't forget your names," Billy further cautioned.

"No, brother Moses, you shust bet we won't; mine is Levi and Seth's is Abraham."

"Well, we have been long enough here in our room, boys," said Billy; "we must now go out and cast about for a location for that clothing emporium."

They left the room, and were soon busily engaged in the work they had given out as having brought them to Roseford.

And so passed the afternoon, and when supper time came they had not succeeded in finding a store, but they had become pretty well acquainted with the town and its citizens.

CHAPTER XIV.

BILLY'S WORK DONE.

It was some time after supper when Broadway Billy again made his appearance at the hotel, this time in proper person.

"Hello!" greeted Dolph Greenwood, who was on the piazza when he came up, "we thought you had gone back to the city. You slipped away from us on the sly."

"No, I haven't gone yet," said Billy, taking a chair near the young man. "I haven't quite finished my work here. The matter of the stolen will hasn't been cleared up, you know."

"But, it's plain enough who took it, I should think."

"It may seem so, but suspicion isn't proof, you know. The prisoner has denied all knowledge of it."

"That he naturally would do."

"Of course; and, if guilty, the proof has got to be forthcoming to fasten it upon him."

"Well, I suppose that's so. How are you going to do it? Can you prove he was here that night? Or can he prove he was not here?"

"I have got to prove he was here, in order to fix the crime on him. How it is to be done I do not know, unless I can make the girl confess what she knows."

"You think she had a hand in it?"

"Does it not look reasonable?"

"Perhaps, if you want to look at it that way; but, I hold Carlotta Gilbert to be as good and pure as an angel, and I don't think she would take any part in such a piece of business."

"But, women are strange creatures," argued Billy. "We know she loves Robert, and she would not say anything at the inquest that would injure him if she could help it. She may be as guilty as he is himself. To judge by looks and appearances only, he is as good and true as she can be."

"The evidence is all against him, though."

"I know it; and, I may be able to bring some of it against her. Don't you see?"

"What do you mean?"

"Well, suppose it was she who stole the will, how then?"

"Impossible!"

"Nothing is impossible, where a woman is concerned. And, what if it can be shown that she killed Gustav?"

"Good heavens! you can't think that?"

"I am merely supposing the matter, to see how it will fit."

"It is folly to think of it in that way. She could never carry the body up and tie it to the rail. Besides, the tracks were plainly those of Rob."

"Well, maybe both of them together had a hand in it. What errand had the girl out there that afternoon about that time? There is something strange about it all, as you must admit."

"I don't see anything in it. I believe she was simply taking a walk, as it is given out; and that she was in time to hear something of the quarrel, and, being alarmed, she ran away as fast as she could."

"Then why did she not report at the station what was the trouble? Instead, she deceived the old agent."

"That is easily explained."

"Then explain it to me."

"Why, apprehending what might happen, she would not say anything for fear of getting Rob into trouble. If he had got off unseen, she would never have opened her lips, is my idea."

There was little in the argument Billy was advancing, but it served to draw thoughts from the young man.

While they were talking, two ragged youth passed down the street and disappeared around a corner.

Billy noted them with satisfaction, and con-

tinued his talk with Greenwood, in argumentation.

"You seem to talk as though you would arrest the young lady upon suspicion," Greenwood presently observed.

"I believe I could do so with good grounds for the action," assured Billy. "It is not my intention, however. If she is in any way guilty, it will come out."

"But, she is not guilty; I could swear to that, almost. Knowing that girl as I do, I am sure there is nothing evil in her."

"Perhaps you have tender thoughts in that direction," laughing.

"I won't deny it."

"It will be convenient for you, then, to have the rival brothers both out of the way. It's an ill wind that blows no good."

Greenwood looked at Billy searchingly.

Billy met this scrutiny smiling, awaiting his response.

"You are heartless to mention such a thing, sir," Greenwood said. "At such a time that is furthest from my thoughts."

"I gave it out as a joke only."

"It's a serious joke, with me. Please say no more about it."

"Very well; just as you please; but, do not mention what I have said to you in confidence."

While Billy was talking he took a small pen-knife from his pocket and began cleaning his nails with it.

He was at the same time keeping watch upon the man beside him, and presently saw him start as his eyes caught the knife.

Billy did not look up, just then, and when he did so Greenwood had regained his composure and carried on the conversation without appearing to notice the knife further.

This knife, by the way, was the object which Billy had picked up at the scene of the crime on the previous night.

It would appear that, recognizing it, Greenwood knew who its owner was.

Broadway Billy remained with him all the evening, even detaining him when he would have taken his leave, and finally Greenwood came to regard him as a pretty good sort of fellow.

Billy entertained him with stories of some of his adventures, not in a boastful way, but naturally, in response to questions asked.

The hour was late when finally they parted.

They had remained on the piazza all the time, and while there the two ragged youths had been seen again, passing up the street.

After Greenwood had gone, Billy took a stroll, and was seen no more that night.

Later on the three Jews came in and retired to their room.

"Well?" Billy cautiously asked, when they had closed the door.

"He's our mutton, sure!" exclaimed Harry.

Seth nodded approval.

"What have you discovered?"

"The boots and the cut rope."

"And an old coat with blood on it," added Seth.

"Where are they?"

"Behind the woodshed at the Woodlawn Manor."

"Good! Now we are coming at the thing in good shape. I'll compare the boots with my plaster molds the first thing in the morning, and if they are a match the case is complete."

"And you'll be able to get Rob out before he gets sent up for the grand jury, sure," Harry declared, exultantly.

"Yes, if I get the proofs straight enough. The examination comes off to-morrow, and the prosecutor thinks he has a sure case."

"And he don't like Rob worth a cent, and will be glad to send him up."

"So I think, from what I have been able to learn. It will be fun to disappoint him."

"But," spoke up Seth, "suppose our man gets alarmed and lights out? He may, when he finds the things gone, you know."

"True enough," agreed Billy. "You boys will make it your business to keep your eyes on him to-morrow, and all the time until his arrest."

"And if he goes to skip out?"

"Nail him, at all hazards."

"Why not take out a warrant and arrest him now, and so take no risk?" suggested Seth.

"That would be the proper plan," assented his chief; "but, I can't miss the fun it will be to spring the trap at the examination to-morrow."

"That's the stuff!" ejaculated Harry. "It would spoil all the fun to do it now and let everybody come there prepared for what was to come off. No; let's shock 'em like with dynamite."

"You boys have done good work," Billy complimented, "and it only remains for you to keep it up to-morrow and the thing is won."

Broadway Billy against the field—a clean wipe-out," suggested Silent Seth.

"He and his team," Billy corrected. "That's about what it is, for everybody is settled in the opinion that Rob Rohnwald is a guilty man; all save one or two very near friends."

"And everybody is going to get astonished," cried Harry.

"If nothing fails," said Billy. "I think I have the case well in hand, and it has been worked out more quickly than I dared hope. I was up all night last night, taking casts of the tracks and hunting for further evidence, and I got what I was after as I have told you."

After some further talk they retired, Billy being well fagged out.

At an early hour they were up again, however, and immediately after breakfast Billy left the hotel.

Stepping out of sight in a convenient place he removed his disguise, and at once proceeded to the Rohnwald residence.

When he had been gone a little while his team set forth upon the business that had been entrusted to them, which will be made known in due time.

Arriving at the manor-house, Billy had some talk with Miss Gilbert, after which he went out to the rear to look for the things the boys had mentioned to him as being there.

Behind a shed he found them; a pair of old coarse boots, an old coat with stains of blood on it, and a rope on a stick, such as gardeners use in marking out the ground when planting. There were two sticks, but a piece of the rope was missing.

One of the servants carried the things into the outer kitchen, and there Billy examined them at his leisure, his face lighting up as he did so. The case was his, now. The boots matched the plaster casts of the tracks in every particular, and the rope he had picked up at the time of the finding of the body was the very piece that had been taken from the gardener's sticks. The case was as good as won.

CHAPTER XV.

DAMAGING TESTIMONY.

WHEN the young detective had finished his work each article had been properly labeled, and they were all done up into as compact a bundle as possible.

This bundle, for the present, Billy left in the care of Mrs. Rohnwald, telling her in what manner of disguise he would be when he came for it; or, if not himself, then his boys.

He left the manor and went in the direction of the hotel.

As he came near there he met Dolph Greenwood, who seemed somewhat troubled in manner.

Billy knew well enough what the trouble was, but he did not let on that he noticed anything unusual about the man.

It was the first time they had met that morning.

"Good-morning," Billy greeted.

Greenwood responded, and then inquired:

"Well, anything new in the case, Mr. Weston?"

"There don't seem to be room for anything new," Billy answered.

"Why?"

"The case seems as plain as it can be."

"Against Rob, you mean?"

"Of course. The people here would lynch him, I believe, if they could have their way about it."

"Yes, I know. There was a guard around the jail all night, to protect the prisoner. If he is guilty, though, he deserves to be hanged."

"Most assuredly."

"I meant to say lynched."

"No; the law here in Jersey is speedy enough."

"By the way, you haven't discovered anything new, have you?"

"Little room for further discoveries now," Billy made reply. "The prosecutor has a sure thing."

"Well, it's too bad, but if he is guilty he must answer for it, that is all. He was a fool to come here as he did with such a purpose in his heart."

"Are you going to stay here to be present at the hearing?" he added.

"Yes, I suppose so," Billy answered.

"As a witness?"

"Yes, if I am called on."

"Your testimony will damage Rob's case."

"Can't help whose case it does damage to,

Greenwood. The truth must be told you know."

"Certainly. And then you are done with the matter, I suppose?"

"Yes, I guess so, for I don't think my services will be required any longer. The mystery is all solved."

"Is there any other detective here, do you know?"

"Not that I am aware of."

"I was going to say, if there is any chance for Rob, and if they are going to try to clear him, I stand willing to aid all I can in the work."

"That's good of you, anyhow, when so many are against him. I guess the case will not require any further detective work after the hearing, however. I think it will be settled."

"Then you see no hope for Rob?"

"You know just how it stands, Mr. Greenwood."

"But, I'm asking you what you think about it."

"And I have told you the prosecutor has a plain case."

The man looked at Billy sharply for a moment, and dropped the matter.

They talked on for a little while about other things, and then parted, and after that Billy was seen no more for a time.

The examination was set down for eleven o'clock on this day, the day before the funeral. It had been proposed that it be postponed till after the funeral, but the people of Roseford had urged it.

Everything being so strongly against the prisoner, there was a sentiment of vengeance against him strong enough to have lynched him without trial, could a leader have been found. The people were fairly crying for his life. The situation had been regarded as serious on the previous night, and the jail had been guarded.

It was the very brutality of the deed that enraged the people. The murder had been as bad as a deed well could be; but, when the body was deliberately tied to the railroad track, that made the crime so appallingly heinous that it was no wonder the people of the village were excited almost to rashness. A very little would have precipitated trouble.

The hearing was to take place in the courthouse, and precisely at eleven o'clock the bell was sounded.

Everybody was on hand at the hour, and the court-room was packed full of people.

A judge had been summoned, and was on the bench to hear the case.

The prosecutor opened the case by giving the story at length in his own way, and by the time he had done, it could be seen plainly what the mind of the jury was.

After that recital the witnesses were called, one by one, and the proofs were piled up against the unfortunate prisoner thick and fast. It was about the same as had been given at the inquest, with some changes.

These changes were in the testimony given by the old station-agent and by the young lady, Miss Gilbert.

"At what time, Mr. Goodluck, did that tramp pass your station?" the prosecutor asked.

"It was about five o'clock," the answer.

"You have seen the prisoner since in the disguise he had on when arrested; did you recognize him as the same man you saw then?"

"I did."

"Then, you say, he and the tramp were the same?"

"I do, sir."

"Did you suspect then who the tramp was?"

"After he had gone past the station I noticed something in his walk which made me think of Rob Rohnwald."

"But, you did not think it was he?"

"No, I did not think it possible it could be."

"Of course not. No one would have dreamed of his coming here in such a guise. Now, sir, how long was it after the tramp had passed when Miss Gilbert came to the station in an excited manner?"

"Perhaps twenty minutes."

"You noticed that she was excited?"

"I did."

"And you mentioned it to her?"

"Yes."

"What did she say?"

"She pretended the train had frightened her."

"You believed that, then?"

"Hardly; but I let it pass. I thought at first she had been frightened by the tramp."

"Did you ask her if she had seen the tramp?"

"Yes, but she evaded the question and soon went away. I noticed when I asked her that, she seemed to grow yet more pale."

The prosecutor looked at the candid old man.

searchingly, as though wondering at his getting so much where he had expected to find it hard to get even a little.

Miss Gilbert was the next witness called.

"What object had you in going for a walk up through the glen on the day in question, Miss Gilbert," she was asked.

"Merely that, sir; the object of a walk," was the reply.

"Then you did not set out expecting to meet Robert Rohnwald?"

"No, sir; I had not heard from him in seven years, and knew not where he was at that time."

"You went down through the wood path to the trout pools, where you stopped, as is proven by a piece of your dress found on one of the bushes aside from the path. What did you stop for?"

"I heard loud voices as I came around the rocks just above the pools, and thought I recognized Robert Rohnwald's."

"And so you did."

"Yes."

"Tell the jury what you heard."

"They were quarreling, and I heard Robert threaten to kill Gustav, unless he took back something he had just said. I was frightened, and fearing that my presence might bring on a fight between them I ran quickly away."

"Ha!" cried the prosecutor. "A threat to kill, mark you, gentlemen of the jury. Had you any idea, Miss Gilbert, that Robert would carry out that threat in the manner he did?"

"He certainly spoke as though he meant what he said."

"Then you did not see him strike the blow?"

"I did not."

"Do you think he did strike it?"

"I do not."

"Then, may I ask, why have you told so much that is damaging to his case?"

"Because, sir," with dignity, "I am sworn to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

"And for which we are greatly obliged to you," said the prosecutor, and he made her a polite bow as he dismissed her from the chair.

The next witness called was Adolphus Greenwood.

He was pale and slightly nervous, at first, but soon got control of himself and told the same story he had told at the inquest.

Then the prisoner himself was called to the stand.

"Robert Rohnwald," was the first question, "where were you on the night of August sixth?"

"I attended a wedding in Washington, where I served as groomsman," was the straightforward reply.

"Can you prove that?"

"I can, sir."

"You will be given opportunity to do so. Now, please tell your version of this affair of the murder. Why you came here as a tramp, why you and your half-brother quarreled, why you threatened him, and all about it."

And so the prisoner did, telling his story fully and truthfully from beginning to end.

"A cunningly devised tale, a very cunningly devised tale," said the prosecutor, when he had done. "But, it will not serve you, sir. The circumstantial evidence against you is too strong. Nothing can break it down, and you are already doomed for your fiendish crime."

The prosecutor then called the attention of the jury to every point in the case; the finding of the blood-stained staff, the tracks, and all.

CHAPTER XVI.

BROADWAY BILLY'S EVIDENCE.

LAWYER PERCIVAL took up the case for the defense promptly.

The first witness he called was Adolphus Greenwood, greatly to the surprise of all present.

"Mr. Greenwood," he asked, "at what time did you set out to take that ride on the afternoon under consideration?"

"It was about five o'clock, sir, I think; I did not note the exact time."

The witness appeared to be uneasy and nervous, more so than he had been when called to the stand before.

"That wood road, we know, is not much traveled. Did you take any notice of the tracks indicating what manner of vehicle had last passed that way?"

"No, sir; I did not give it any thought or attention."

"Are you acquainted with the team and wagon with which Farmer Barringer usually comes to town?"

The prisoner's nervousness was increasing.

"Yes, sir."

"What is it, please?"

"A horse and a mule, with a wagon with broad tires."

"Exactly. And, you did not see this track on the road when you went for your horseback ride?"

"I did not."

"And yet it was there when you passed along that way; we have proof for this."

"I—I did not notice them. How do you know they were there?"

"Because, your horse went over the road after that team had come in, as the tracks plainly show. Mr. Barringer came in between seven and eight o'clock. How do you account for the disparity in time?"

"I—I don't account for it; there must be a mistake somewhere."

"It is quite evident there is, sir. The mistake is in thinking Robert Rohnwald was the slayer of his half-brother."

Greenwood turned white to the lips.

The prosecutor looked at him in amazement, as did every one else.

"So, Mr. Greenwood," the lawyer went on, "one false statement is brought home to you. If you were on hand to witness the meeting between the half-brothers, it was certainly not at the time you took the ride along the wood road. The testimony given by Peter Goodluck and Miss Gilbert proves that. What have you to say to this?"

"They—they may be mistaken in the time, as well as I—"

"Impossible; the time has been fixed well enough, sir. That is all for the present. I will now call Doctor Graves."

Greenwood stepped down, and the old doctor took his place.

"Doctor, you examined carefully the wound on the head of the victim in this case, I believe."

"I did, sir."

"Do you think, sir, it was made with a weapon like this?"

He held up to view the half-peeled hickory club Robert Rohnwald had carried on the previous day.

The doctor took it and examined it critically.

"I do not think this was the weapon used, sir," he said. "The wound shows a dent that was plainly made by a protuberance on the weapon used. Besides, sir, the blow would not smear the weapon with blood like this is stained."

"Thank you, doctor; that will do."

The doctor gave back the stick and stepped down.

The room was in silent hush, every person eager to learn more.

"I will now call Mr. William Weston, the distinguished young detective from New York," said Lawyer Percival.

There was a stir at once, and every neck was craned to see Billy. There was a second or so of suspense, when the Jew, Moses Cohen, rose in his place and stepped forward.

On reaching the witness stand he removed his disguise, and lo! it was Broadway Billy.

There was a moment given up to applause.

"Mr. Weston," the lawyer inquired, "what brought you to Roseford?"

"I was sent for by Mrs. Rohnwald, to undertake the finding of a will that had been stolen."

"By what train did you come here?"

"I came on the engine of the Flyer, and witnessed the running over the body of Gustav Rohnwald."

"Did you make any particular discovery then?"

"I did, sir. I discovered that the man had been dead when placed on the track, and I resolved to look into the matter further when I had time."

"What became of the rope with which he was bound?"

"I put it in my pocket, sir, thinking it might be useful as a clue."

Dolph Greenwood was ashy white, now, and his forehead was damp with perspiration.

"When did you learn who the dead man was?"

"When the body was brought home to the manor. I was there at the time, talking with Mrs. Rohnwald."

"And you took the case with the determination to solve the mystery?"

"I did, sir."

"Have you succeeded?"

"I have."

"Is Robert Rohnwald guilty of the crime?"

"He is not."

"And you can prove it?"

"I can."

"How?"

"By putting the crime where it belongs."

"Then you have discovered the murderer? Who is he?"

"Adolphus Greenwood!"

"It's a lie! I say it's a lie!" cried Greenwood, leaping to his feet. "You cannot prove it on me! I defy you to do it."

"It is the truth," retorted Broadway Billy, sternly. "You are the man who killed Gustav Rohnwald! I would never make the charge without the proofs to back it up."

Greenwood was placed under arrest at once, in spite of his protests, and the case proceeded.

"Now, Mr. Weston, please tell, in your own way, all about the case from your standpoint, and let us see whether you are right or not. Tell us when you first suspected Greenwood, and all about it."

"When I set out from the manor, after the body had been brought home," Billy began, "in company with Coroner Parkhurst and others, to go to the scene of the crime, I was on the alert for whatever might take place. We had gone but a little way when Mr. Greenwood met us and inquired what had happened. When told, he immediately recalled a tramp he had seen that afternoon, and the words he had heard him having with Gustav Rohnwald. This is point Number One."

"He had seen the tramp again, later, and knew where he was sleeping in the wood, and led us there. This is point Number Two."

"With the prisoner, we went on to the scene of the crime. The first thing discovered there was the blood-stained stick, which was recognized at once as the one the tramp had been seen to carry, and then came to me the conviction that Robert Rohnwald was innocent of the murder. No one but a fool would leave such a clue to be picked up by the first comer. I had instinctively decided him to be innocent, by his words and manner, at the time of his arrest; this confirmed the belief. This stick had more the appearance of having been laid there on purpose to be easily and promptly discovered. This is point Number Three."

"Looking further, I found a small knife which I put in my pocket without showing it to any one. Greenwood asked what it was, but I did not tell him. Still on the search, I found the trail of tracks and blood where the body had been carried up to the railroad bank, and telling the others not to mar them, I followed them to the top. Greenwood was unnaturally intent on all I did and said, which is point Number Four."

"I did not go forward to the place where the body had been run over, but most of the others did. While they were gone I made a close examination of the clothes the tramp had on. There was not a drop of blood on them anywhere. This could hardly have been possible, had he carried the body that distance. I said nothing about that. And, when he assured his old friend, Mr. Goodluck, most solemnly, that he was innocent, it only confirmed my own decision."

To test it, I proposed taking one of his boots and fitting it to the tracks, to which he gave consent, readily and gladly. The test was made, and to all appearances the boot did fit the tracks exactly. But, so might the boots of a hundred men have done, being of the same size. That test was not satisfying to myself, though the others unthinkingly accepted it as proof of the prisoner's guilt. But, the track where the test was made was not perfect, while those at the bottom of the bank, in the rain-washed clay, were perfect. I called no attention to these, keeping them for further investigation. It was there, at that time, that I first had a suspicion of the truth—that Greenwood was the man wanted. When it was found that the boot fit the track so nearly, there was, in his demeanor, such exultation as only a man escaping a great peril would betray."

"When we returned to the village I went to see Mrs. Rohnwald again, as I had promised to, to tell her what I had been able to learn. There I had occasion to mention Mr. Greenwood's name, and the manner in which it was received gave me another suspicious thought against him. He had, it was shown, been trying to win Miss Gilbert, but in vain. He knew he had two rivals, the half-brothers Rohnwald. With both of them out of the way his prospects might be better. That was point Number Five."

"When I left the house I went forth in a disguise. Procuring some plaster, I went back to the scene of the crime, and there I mixed the plaster and poured it into two of the most

perfect of the tracks. I lay down near at hand and waited for it to harden. I remained there until near daylight, when, taking up the casts, I set out to follow the trail of Greenwood's horse on the previous afternoon.

"It is daylight early, you know. I followed it for a long distance, and noted that it had gone over the road after the coming toward town of a wagon with broad tires drawn by a horse and a mule. When the track left the road it went through the underwood to a path, where it turned again toward the village. At a point about an eighth of a mile from the railroad bank I came to a place where the horse had been tied in the bushes for some time, at a distance from the path. Upon making that discovery my suspicions were strengthened. For what purpose had that stop been made?"

"Well, I went on, watching the ground closely, and in places I found the tracks of a man, going in two directions—the same tracks, and they were identical with the tracks that had been made by the man who had carried the body up the bank and placed it on the rail. That was point Number Six, and I then decided that Adolphus Greenwood was my man. Still, I had to prove it, strong as my my suspicion already was. Following the path on, I came to the spot where the murder had been done, and there, by daylight, I made a thorough examination."

CHAPTER XVII.

BROADWAY BILLY'S TRIUMPH.

THE entire court-room was so still that the fabled pin might have been heard to drop anywhere.

The vast crowd was held spellbound, the prosecuting attorney was looking at Billy with amazement depicted upon his face, while Greenwood, with pale face and staring eyes, seemed as if turned to stone.

"My further examination," Billy proceeded, after a momentary pause, "revealed much. At a point near the pools, where Robert Rohnwald had been fishing, I found where a man had been concealed in the bushes. The tracks were plain, showing the wearer of a fine boot to have been the person hidden there, and there I found a nickel matchbox. I took a cast of one of those tracks also.

"I went around and around that spot, widening my circle each time, in search of the weapon that had been used, and finally I found it, about a good throw distant in the bushes and briars. I was on the right track. I returned cautiously to the manor, where I breakfasted, and after breakfast I went over to the railroad station to telegraph for my assistants in the city. At the station I made inquiry about the owner of the horse and mule team, learned who he was, and that he had been seen coming into town after seven o'clock in the evening.

"Coming back to the hotel, I met Greenwood, and from that time took a great interest in him. We took a walk together out to the scene of the crime, and by watching him closely I knew I had the right man. He looked several times over in the direction in which he had thrown the weapon with which he had killed his victim, and otherwise betrayed himself. As we were coming away I caught sight of the bit of dress stuff on the bush, and Greenwood saw it at the same instant. I know it had not been there before, for it was too conspicuous to have missed my eye. He had put it there with a purpose in view. That was another point, of course."

The accused man was like marble, his eyes were bulging, and a cold perspiration was upon his forehead in great beads.

"I made no revelation of what I had discovered," Billy went on, "save to Mrs. Rohnwald and her daughter, and but little to them, yet. Everybody was led to think I believed in the guilt of Robert Rohnwald. This was to allay any suspicion on the part of Greenwood. I wanted him to tell his story at the inquest, and so stand committed."

"You all know the story he told. After the inquest I assumed the disguise you have just seen me discard, and went to the station, later on, to meet my boys. We came to the hotel and registered, and I gave my assistants the work they had to do. It was agreed that I was to occupy Greenwood during the evening, while they made a thorough search of his stable and out-buildings for further evidence against him."

"Our success was even greater than I had hoped for. We found the boot he had worn on the occasion of his carrying the body up to the railroad track, the rope from which the piece

had been cut with which he tied the body to the rail, and an old coat with blood stains—"

"Curse you, die!"

Dolph Greenwood had sprung to his feet, and his hand was drawing a revolver from his hip pocket, but quicker than thought Broadway Billy had him covered with a weapon, having had an eye upon him all the time, and the coward faltered. The next moment hands were laid upon him and he was disarmed.

"Do you want any further proof of his guilt?" Billy quietly asked, his revolver having disappeared. "Do you want any further proof of his character? But, let me finish my story, and then I will turn over all my proofs to the proper authorities."

"I detained the prisoner at the hotel while my boys were at work, and while talking with him I used the knife, I had found, to cut and clean my nails, taking care to display it so that he might see it fully. He recognized it, and gave a start when he saw it. From that moment he suspected me, and tried to learn what I knew, but I took care not to let him get much satisfaction."

"This morning, after having very probably sought the coat, boots and rope to destroy them, he was very much disturbed, and when he met me he questioned me closely, all the while drawing the rope the more tightly around his own neck. The case against him is complete. There is no chance for him to escape. The story told by Robert Rohnwald is true in every particular, I believe, while the story told by the murderer is in almost every particular false. He did, however, witness the meeting between the half-brothers, while he lay in the bushes awaiting a fair chance to do the deed he had in mind."

"Greenwood loved Miss Gilbert, and to win her he was willing to go any length. He it was who stole the will from the house. You, citizens of Roseford, will remember it was Greenwood the elder who built the chimney in the house, when some alterations were made. He put in the secret niche, and had told his son about it. My proof? A letter found in a pocket of the old coat I have mentioned, which had been laid away with the will, and which must have slipped out when the rascal took the document from his pocket to destroy it."

"Here is the letter," showing it. "It is its own proof that it was with the will in the secret place over the mantel. Why he stole the will you can surmise as well as I. It was to injure Gustav Rohnwald. But, that was not enough; he must remove him, and he laid his plans."

"He was at the trout pools for the purpose of doing the deed, and was only awaiting his best chance, when the seeming tramp came along and everything seemed to favor the wretch. Why not kill two birds with one stone? He would murder Gustav and put the crime upon Robert! Excellent! Then, to make it better still, who should come along just at the right time to hear a threat but Miss Gilbert. He would force her to tell what she had heard. Everything was playing into his hands. Need I say more? I think not. To do so would be to repeat myself. I will now call my assistants forward and display the proofs of which I have spoken."

At that Billy gave a signal and Happy Harry and Silent Seth came forward and took their places beside him.

The crowd, at the same time, broke out into a wild thunder of applause, and above the din were cries for the release of Robert Rohnwald.

Lawyer Percival had leaped to his feet and grasped Billy's right hand in both of his, and while the room was in its wild uproar he had to shout to make himself heard as he said:

"Weston, you have mistaken your calling; you should have been a lawyer!"

"Then you think I am not a success as a detective? Perhaps Mr. Rohnwald will differ with you there."

"No, no," the lawyer hastened to set right; "I meant to say that you would be a brilliant ornament to our profession."

"I can never be anything other than what I am, sir," Billy declared, "whether I'm good or bad at it, for my whole heart is in it."

As soon as the judge could restore order, the case proceeded to its closing.

The proofs were shown, and the crime was fastened upon Greenwood so tightly that he could deny nothing.

He made a confession and his story proved how well Billy had woven the net from the meager beginning from which he had started.

After Robert Rohnwald had gone away, after his high words with Gustav, he, the murderer, stepped out from his hiding-place and dealt the fatal blow. He flung the weapon as far away as he could, and laid the body out of sight for

the time being, and that done, began to plan his alibi and the scheme to throw the crime upon the innocent man.

He knew the time would be an important item in the whole matter. He must be able to show where he was at the time the crime was done. If the tramp had been seen coming down the road, that time would be shown, and Miss Gilbert could not deny what time she was on the scene and heard the high words and the threat. After some thought it came to him to say he was on horseback on the wood road at the time when the two men quarreled.

But, he must prove that he was there. He followed the direction Robert Rohnwald had taken, and watched him till he lay down in the wood to sleep, and when he was asleep, slipped up and stole his stick away from him. It was by that time near eight o'clock. He went to the house by a rear way and got his horse, together with the old coat, the boots, and the piece of rope. Mounting, he rode along the wood road for a long distance, in order that his horse's tracks could be followed if that point came in question, though he had no idea it ever would.

On the homeward route he tied the horse where Billy had discovered the marks of its standing, and going on on foot, smeared the club with blood and put some hairs on it from the victim's head, and then carried the body and put it on the track. He wanted the body discovered early, so that the arrest could be made before Robert could awaken and go away. After putting the body there he got his horse and went home, hiding the coat and boots in an out-shed, intending to destroy them when opportunity was given. He had supper, then, telling where he had been and how long he had been absent from the house upon his little excursion.

From that time he watched the matter, saw the Flyer make its stop at the spot where he had left the body, and again at the station. After that it was easy for him to meet the coroner and his party as he did, pretending to know nothing about the matter whatever. His confession was a full one, every particular being brought out, and when it was ended Robert Rohnwald was released.

The good citizens of Roseford immediately tried to undo the wrong they had done him in adjudging him guilty, and Broadway Billy and his "team" were the applauded heroes of the hour. Never in its history had Roseford seen such a demonstration, and it will probably never see another like it.

Greenwood would have hanged but for the fact that poison was somehow conveyed to him in his cell, and he was found one morning dead.

That Robert and Carlotta were married, and are happy in the old homestead mansion, the reader will assume without prompting, it was so right and righteous to be so.

Broadway Billy afterward saw his friend, the engineer, and gave him the full particulars of the case as he had promised to do.

THE END.

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BEADLE AND ADAMS, Publishers,

98 William Street, New York.